Narrative Possibility: an introduction to, and a move towards, Integral Creativity

By

Paddy Plasto

A thesis presented to the University of Western Sydney Hawkesbury in partial fulfillment of the requirements of Doctor of Philosophy

September, 2005

© P.Plasto 2005
STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICATION

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution,

.................................................................

(Signature)
CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .................................................................................. p1
1. Ways of Knowing
3. Making a Difference?
8. Methodological Summary

ORIGINONE .................................................................................... p13
14 Originone (a)
16. Originone (b)
19. Originone (c)
23. Originone (d)
   The Story: Making It Up
24. Originone (e)
   (or the Discovery of a Paradox)
27. Originone (f)
   Forewords: Winter 1999
28. Originone (g)
   Points of Departure: creativity, cant and cantata
33. Originone (h)
   Integral Perspectives and Possibilities
   Jean Gebser
35. Ken Wilber
36. Terry Sands
44 Originone (i)
   In Order to have Order, Order is Created, but..
45. Originone (j)
   The Narrative Possibility Approach to Painting
46. Originone (k)

ORIGINTWO ..................................................................................... p47
47. Origintwo (a)
51. Origintwo (b)
   State, process, event, and product.
   April 1999
52. Origintwo (c)
   Identifying the story/teller
56. Origintwo (d)
   Visual metaphors, impermanence, and a Papuan event:
   spacetime first, sentence later...
58. Origintwo (e)
   Making Meanings
61. Origintwo (f)
   POSTMODERNISM: the tenuous tenure of (word) rules
64. Origintwo (g)  
Ode to the type-writer and all postmodern utterances
65. Origintwo (h)  
Don’t drink drive it’s a laundry detergent: myth and ideology
68. Myth
70. Modern world myths
73. Mythologies
76. Postmodern, myth/ideology
77. Postscript

ORIGINTHREE.................................................................p78

78. Originthree (a)  
the Gessoflecting Paintbrusher
79. Originthree (b)
83. Originthree (c)  
Expressing the ineffable: thinking and making
87. Originthree (d)  
Halls of Frames. Halls of Fame. Andrew Wyeth
88. The Wyeth Center. A brief biography: Andrew Wyeth
90. A Short Description
91. Originthree (e)  
Supports and Consorts
92. and touching ground
94. The Gessoflecting Paintbrusher: creating the beautiful, skillful, meaningful, innovative plot
100. Originthree (f)  
Raising realistic hands offering multifarious fruit
107. Postscript
107. Leonardo Da Vinci- from the “Treatise on painting”
109. Originthree (g)
110. Originthree (h)  
Integral art, creativity and interpretation

ORIGINFOUR.................................................................p118

118. Originfour (a)  
Forewords: it’s Winter again (2000)  
With further dilemmas of meaningful exchange…
119. Originfour (b)  
Taking off the lid…getting ready for another coat
120. Originfour (c)
121. Sharing a possibility: the same piece of stone
128. Recollection
131. The Narrative Possibility Approach to painting
ORIGINFIVE…………………………………………………………p132
132. Originfive (a)
135. Be my guest
140. Originfive (b)
    Parallel Visions in Space, Time and Light
141. Art and Shlain
151. Originfive (c)
    Thinking it Through (to start from finish to finish from start)
148. Originfive (d)
    Shlain and Gebser
151. Revolutionary Art and Narrative Possibility

ORIGINSIX ……………………………………………………………p152
152. Originsix (a)
153. Continuity and Contents: ‘...the traffic between storytelling and
    metaphysics is continuous.’
154. The Language of Home
156. Originsix (b)
157. Originsix (c)
160. Potentials
    Creative Groups
163. A work of Art
165. Origins, or the discovery of a paradox
167. Work of Afterwords
170. Originsix (d)
171. Meetings, and the Sacred in Art
172. Meeting with David Bohm
174. Meeting with Terry Sands
175. The Meeting
176. Originsix (e)
    The Transition
177. Individual SPACE, SPACE, SPACE
178. At Home: the Strategic-Studio-Space
    ABCDEFGH and I

ORIGINSEVEN…………………………………………………………180
180. A brief introduction
183. Narrative Possibility: Creativity, Philosophy, and Research Process
184. Scanning and Layering
186. The (Narrative Possibility) Images
    Method and practice
188. Narrative Possibility Paintings
201. Narrative Possibility and Integral Art
202. Alex Grey, 1953...
205. Narrative Possibility and Integral Consciousness
210. Magic Structure
213. Mythic Structure
214. Mental-Rational Structure

ORIGINIGHT

218. Towards Integrality
223. The Narrative Possibility Approach to painting
224. Making a Difference
229. Postscript 2004

BIBLIOGRAPHY

GLOSSARY
ABSTRACT

Narrative Possibility: an introduction to, and a move towards, Integral Creativity is an exploration of creativity and a creative exploration, and it is a search for meaning and making which carries as backpressure an individual, societal, cultural, and global need for change. Change, as I have interpreted it, is a change of consciousness.

While the exploration is multidimensional and multidirectional it has as its foundation a process of communication that is, I think, essential in and to all aspects of our present and past, showing and telling. Implicitly and explicitly we define ourselves and all that we encounter by stories. I am using the term ‘story’ to mean showing and telling in all its forms but my approach, although it is predominantly aligned to Western interpretation, is an aperspectival inquiry into and through word and image.

Narrative Possibility: an introduction to, and a move towards Integral Creativity, comprises and integrates stories by a layered methodology that includes diverse perspectives from theorists and artists. Among these: David Bohm, Andrew Wyeth, and Leonard Shlain are important, but, in the aspects of their work which focus on Integral Consciousness, Jean Gebser, Ken Wilber, and Terry Sands are most prominent. My exploration also incorporates stories of my lived experience as student, mother, visual artist, teacher and researcher, as well as fictional stories and poems. And, in both methodological structure and the writing and content of this work (in documenting its progress and in recording the unfolding visual work of several of my students,) I bring to this thesis my philosophical approach: Narrative Possibility.

Narrative Possibilities are stories that do not have preconceived outcomes. Narrative Possibilities originate and manifest in and through (and require, therefore, a methodology that encompasses) Creative Events, States, Processes, and Products. Narrative Possibility is a disciplined method that unfolds a story to a point in which all aspects appear to cohere, and yet this aspect of the story is untold: there are no definitive words or marks which obviously or even abstractly point to completion.

Creativity, according to David Bohm, is a natural potential largely blocked by the way civilization has developed.¹ I accept this premise and suggest that Narrative Possibility is a creative approach to integration and that it is a personal, social, and spiritual move towards our possible evolution.

LIST OF WORKS and ILLUSTRATIONS

Title Page, Paddy Plasto, Thumbnail *The Tryst* (2003), Acrylic on canvas


79. Andrew Wyeth, *Christina's World* (1948), Tempera on panel, 32x47\(\frac{3}{4}\) ins.

80. Study for *Christina's World* (1948), Pencil on paper, 14x20ins


82. Andrew Wyeth, *The Sauna* (1968), Tempera on panel, 24\(\frac{1}{4}\)x28\(\frac{3}{4}\) ins.

93. Andrew Wyeth, *Adrift* (1982), Tempera on panel, 27\(\frac{3}{4}\)x27\(\frac{3}{4}\) ins.

95. Thumbnail of *Adrift* (1982), Tempera on panel

100. Paddy Plasto, Title/date unknown. Watercolour/ink on paper, 40x30cm.

101. Paddy Plasto, Title/date unknown. Watercolour/ink on paper, 40x30cm.

102. Thumbnail of painting (p. 101.)

103. Thumbnail : developing image in *The Tryst* from form to detail (see p. 6.)

104. Thumbnail: found form changed (see p. 6.)

112. Pablo Picasso, Drawing (1926), 31x46.7cm.


139. Odilon Redon, *The Buddha* (1905), Pastel, 90x73cm.


Paddy Plasto, *From Alchemy to Algeny* (1989), Acrylic on paper, 55x40cm.

166. Student C. ‘*Night and Day*’(1994/95), Pastel on paper, A4

Student C. ‘*Merwoman*’(1994/95), Pastel on paper, A4
182. Student A. Untitled (2001), Charcoal on paper, A3
183. Student C. Untitled (2001), Acrylic on paper, A4
183. Student B. Untitled (2001), Pastel on paper, A3
204. Alex Grey, *Dying* (1990), Oil, 44x60ins.
211. Figure 5: *Nubian Battle* (1300 BC),
213. Figure 19. *The Prince with the Crown of Feathers* (1500 BC),
223. Paddy Plasto, *The Tryst* (2003), work showing detail, A3

**NARRATIVE POSSIBILITY: STUDENT WORK**

122. Student C. First wash (2000), Acrylic on canvas, A3
123. Student C. Second working (2000), Acrylic on canvas, A3
124. Student C. Third working (2000), Acrylic on canvas, A3
125. Student C. Fourth working (2000), Acrylic on canvas, A3
188. Student E. (2001), Painting One, Acrylic on canvas, A3. Images 1-6
189. Student E. (2001), Painting One, Acrylic on canvas, A3. Images 7-11
190. Student E. (2001), Painting Two, Acrylic on canvas, A3. Images 1-8
191. Student E. (2001), Completed image, Acrylic on canvas, A3
191. Student E. (2001), Completed image, Acrylic on canvas, A3
193. Student A. (2001), Completed image, Acrylic on canvas, A3
194. Student B. (2001), Acrylic on canvas, A3. Images 1-4
198. Student C. (2001), Completed images, Acrylic on canvas, A3/A4
199. Student C. (2000), Paper and acrylic on synthetic plate, 20cm
210. Student E. Work in progress (2000), Acrylic on canvas, A3
211. Student C. Work in progress (2000), Acrylic on canvas, A3
212. Student E. Work in progress (2000), Acrylic on canvas, A3
214. Student E. Work in progress (2000), Acrylic on canvas, A3
216 Student C. Work in progress (2000), Acrylic on canvas, A3
217. Student B. (2001), Acrylic on canvas, A3
221. Student F. (2001), Acrylic on canvas, A4
222. Student G. (2001), Acrylic on paper, A4
Ways of knowing…

In modern societies, knowledge was equated with science, and was contrasted to narrative; science was good knowledge, and narrative was bad, primitive, irrational (and thus associated with women, children, primitives, and insane people). Knowledge, however, was good for its own sake, one gained knowledge, via education, in order to be knowledgeable in general, to become an educated person. This is the ideal of liberal arts in education. In a postmodern society, knowledge becomes functional…you learn things, not to know them, but to use that knowledge. ¹

In 1986 when personal experiences and philosophical conundrums seemed to demand explanation, I became a university student. My curiosity, while reflected in both the above statements in some measure was, within these generalisations, moved by other needs. I wanted answers to questions (once childlike and unformatted, once adolescent and muddled; and now accentuated by my fifty years of lived experience and maturity,) that had gradually developed form and needed substance. And although I had been studying (and writing and painting) informally and seriously for many years, the impetus of my inquiry altered sometime in the eighties. Once my focus had been subjective and articulated simply, ‘Who am I,’ and ‘Why am I here?’ By 1986 the urge was different and my questions were complex and culturally, socially, environmentally, ecologically and spiritually determined: ‘Who are we,’ and ‘What are we doing here?’

I wasn’t sure if answers could be acquired or discovered through formal academic research, or if there were answers, but I did expect to find (in the work of ecological, theosophical, and philosophical searchers,) examples of similar questions, and at least partial answers, recorded within the wealth of ideas and/or theories accepted and proven by formulae, argument and consensus of opinion, and by practice. Whether science was good knowledge and narrative bad was inconsequential, of consequence were the methods used to acquire and assess knowledge and while I looked for knowledge that equated with wisdom, wisdom, I thought, was deep understanding, it connected theory and real experience. How I could employ whatever knowledge I gleaned useful was a peripheral calculation not realised. I studied and felt I had to, but started university when my children were nearly grown and formal work was possible. I was conscious, however, of the weight of factual information, and aware that modern education had, in most cases, molded the minds, hearts, and hands of those who are politically and practically dominant.

By 1998 I was able to write a reasonably good essay, and had learned that, in the erudite language of modernism and the skepticism of postmodernism, my questions adhered in a unifying and humanistic Grande Narrative, while my answers, if there were any, were collaged in multiple mini-narratives, ² ambiguous but temporally useful (and marketable) in context. But I had also gleaned that knowledge only becomes real, dynamic, living and transformative through an event (an internal or external experience of significance), and/or a meeting, with (physical, emotional, or spiritual,) other story tellers, other thinkers and makers and their words, images and visions. Meetings that, rather than offering only practical and vendible information, explanation, proof, and/or alternative interpretation, create a new connection.

² Klages, An Introduction to Postmodernism, p. 3.
When I began this research paper in 1998 I had, over twelve years (with temporary deviations into academic study in Communication/Professional Writing and Visual Art) completed a degree in broad-based Philosophy and Comparative Religion, and a Bachelor of Letters (which included projects in Art Education) as a distant student at Deakin University. And concurrently I had continued to study works by a number of authors exploring consciousness and advocating the need for environmental, ecological, and self-conscious change, and some who were suggesting that humans have entered a time of transition in which a true change of consciousness is underway. Despite all this study, and rather than useful or temporary answers, I had amassed multitudes of academically accepted theories, further questions and a magnificent but unprovable idea that a change of consciousness would provide new connections and, thus, a new experience of reality.

Between 1988 and 1998, I had also attended courses at Schumacher College (UK), and Adyar (India), and too, I was painting and working with children in a community art group. It was the latter of these experiences which was, unexpectedly, to expand my questions to include ‘creativity’. I knew, from working with my own children, that each child originally communicates in their drawings and paintings a unique expression of their external and internal world. And I remember a feeling of loss when my daughter, at the end of her first year at school, insisted on using a ruler to measure and draw the opposite sides of a Christmas Tree. This memory and its associated feeling resurfaced in the group context, and I began to see the connection between a loss of the ability to freely express, the social and cultural pressures to conform and the studies I was undertaking at university. Specifically I was connecting the influence of ideologies and communication and the practices of education with the conformity and competitive approach the children in my group had towards ‘art’.

In Leonard Shlain's book *Art and Physics* I found the following explanations helpful. In the course of a child's 'education', he writes, when 'language, math, and logic take hold, they drive magic out of the child's being, and by early adolescence, rationality stands triumphant over the pale atrophied survivors of the once-powerful juvenile convictions about magic, mystery and myth'. Children learn how and what to think and do and how to act in the process of modern socialisation where a child is steadily encouraged 'to accept the tenets of the reigning paradigm'. Even games, rather than having fun as their goal, become 'rituals involving competition, ranging from organised sports to war, whose goals are rather more specifically money, sex, or power'. These ideas were consistent with the process and the products I was observing, and in relation to creativity and expression it seemed essential to question whether our society, our culture, and our

---

3 Among these Ken Wilber, David Bohm, Georges Gurdjieff, Peter Ouspensky, and Jiddu Krishnamurti.
Real Change is not a rearrangement. Real Change is not about dealing with changes. Real Change is not about reacting to the changes as they occur in life. Real Change is not merely avoiding what is coming from the future. Real Change is not familiar, and it is not ‘just like’ anything else.
5 It should be noted that some authors use Mental and/or Rational when referring to a structure of consciousness, others refer to rationality in relation to a particular process of thought, or state of mind. Where possible I have used the terms mental/rational in my writing, to refer to both a particular structure of consciousness and its predominate ‘way of knowing’, although I have, where appropriate, referred to rational as a particular process of thought.
7 Shlain, *Art and Physics*.
8 Shlain, *Art and Physics*.
ideologies have developed, been developed by and are dependent on systems of communication that produce and perpetuate ‘ways of knowing’ that rely on qualification, classification and objective criteria. And in accepting that the primary tools of learning (reading, writing and arithmetic) both produce and are products of a system that stipulates and practices linearity, it seemed likely that the structures of linear development, the alphabet and numerals, employed to teach also serve to homogenise and limit expression to given parameters, and that surely creative work was made and judged accordingly.

Of course I saw the parallels between a child’s developmental change (from a ‘belief in discontinuous space and mythical time’, ⁹ to an adult’s acceptance of the finite, and from an innocent ‘desire to recreate the world in his or her own terms’¹⁰ to objective understanding and academic realism) and the rise of civilisation, but I did not accept the necessity of subjugation. I am not suggesting that we should or could look back to the innocence and naiveté of childhood, but the apparent inconsistencies in the grand theories of emancipation and the privileged stance and stability of science, objectivity and knowledge seemed untenable and I decided to explore the contemporary significance commonly attributed to ‘creativity’ and the changes in the meanings of the term. I knew that modern meaning explained it as a function of genius or talent,¹¹ and an innovative addition to existing material and that there was a possibility that it was a natural potential which, for the majority, became atrophied, blocked and overwritten by the way civilization has developed. ¹² Nevertheless, I suspected that there was more to it than an obvious cause and effect, and thus I wanted to explore this possibility and also the way or ways that creativity, (assuming that it does participate in change) could participate in real change.

As my work with the community art group had finished and I had reached an impasse in my painting (I was questioning the creative content of my images and the difference in my work and works that were practiced and pre-conceived,) my decision to continue with academic work now had both personal incentive and enigma. I decided then, to approach my research work as a journey that might ‘make a difference’. However, I also accepted that the need for a change of consciousness was, as I interpreted it, a human imperative. It was personal and communal, it was corporeal, psychological and spiritual and though it did not directly seem to reflect the environmental or ecological concerns of our world, I was certain that our modes of thinking and making not only contributed to, but often created, the internal and external world we inhabit.

---

⁹ Shlain, Art and Physics.
¹⁰ Shlain, Art and Physics.
¹¹ See R Williams, Keywords, Flamingo Books, 1983, p. 82.
Making a difference?

I chose to do this work at The University of Western Sydney in the School of Social Ecology. Social Ecology encouraged interdisciplinary approaches to knowledge, recognised the need for change, and supported non-traditional research with an ethical stance and a commitment to ‘making a difference’.

I knew, before I applied to the University of Western Sydney, that research, undertaken with a commitment to ‘making a difference’ would necessitate an evolutionary approach that included finding a form able to communicate academic knowledge and personal experience. I was aware that my academic study and my experiences (both lived experiences and experience as a painter) were radically different. Not only are there differences in medium and message, but in methods of communication and I knew that connecting theory to real experience and intellectual knowledge with other ways of knowing meant facing a methodological dilemma. But rather than argue their differences I determined to tell and show them.

The academic approach to knowledge is dependent on reasoned arguments and practical application, and requires a language and form appropriate to the field of already existing knowledge. Thus, in the present research paper it has been necessary for me to communicate verifiable information in shared language and concentrated construction, or deconstruction, while also providing a context for the present research by recollected stories of lived experiences, by examples of creative writings and paintings and their process of narrative manifestation. I was certain, however, that although the classificatory requirements of science and my qualification of narrative, called for very different approaches to knowledge, both included fictional and factual stories, and both are simply showing and telling. In this work by ‘telling’ I am including mediums and channels of social and individual communication conveyed with words, and suggesting that the majority of these are narrative exchanges: they are about a thing conceived of, questioned or experienced. And by ‘showing’ I include the spectrum of vision actually apprehended in the external world, the world of imagination, and in forms of insight. (The majority of the latter are explained through the medium of ‘telling’, as narrative exchanges; exchanges that convey, are about something.)

I also acknowledge the paradox inherent in undertaking an academic work that questions the present approaches to knowledge. My thesis statement is as follows:

Western Society has, in general, lost touch with the integrative experience of creativity and the innate ability to express inner, intangible, realities in material form. In Western Societies we have concentrated on the communication of the externals of our experience. Through an almost ‘exclusive reliance on the mental structure of consciousness’, we have produced tangible, tactile and rational formations and formulations, and thus we have largely bypassed the opportunity to consciously participate in and express ourselves as a whole being, a being with a spectrum of consciousness through which to experience and know, and in which spiritual, emotional, mental and physical knowledge and existence is not separated. Human beings have the potential to express and integrate many layers of reality and experience. Integration, according to Steven Swanson, is a

---

process that includes ‘the perfectly valid means of knowing associated with previous
structures of consciousness’,\textsuperscript{14} and human beings have the potential to experience beyond
these structures and the ability to manifest these experiences.\textsuperscript{15}

With this in mind I began to look more closely into some present Western approaches to
knowledge, creativity and communication. But in recognising the necessary limits of a search
into these entire fields, the integral world-view and the possibility of an integral way of knowing
and experiencing became my focus. In keeping with the suspicion that my Narrative Possibility
paintings fulfilled my ideal of creative work, and to give me the scope to write ‘within the
 confines of rationally-orientated language’\textsuperscript{16} in a ‘difference-making’ way, I also resolved that
the work itself should be creative: integrative, rational and arational.\textsuperscript{17}

I considered it necessary, therefore, to allow the research to evolve sequentially and
spontaneously, and I understood that it was also necessary to create a form that would both
represent these evolutionary processes, and provide an experience of them. How I would do this
was not initially clear, but eventually, when I accepted that this work, like a painting, would
reveal form only by application, I started to write. Writing this research paper has been an event
of significance for me. The research has led me to possibilities not previously considered, and
given me insights and connections I did not envision until they emerged in doing the work, and
in meeting with other minds. Meetings with others (mental, emotional and physical and/or
those deeper unexplainable meetings,) instigate change and they have formed a most important
aspect of my research work. Thus, I have made concrete the process of my research by revealing
changes as they occurred within the work, and thereby demonstrating and exploring the nuances
of change itself. Showing changes in research direction, changes in thinking, making, as they
occurred and recounting other events that were significant in my life and instigated change have
not only provided a context for inquiry, but are examples of the same principals inherent in the
original contribution of my research work, an approach to painting which I have called Narrative
Possibility.

The completed work is composed of ten chapters, or \textit{Origins}. Each \textit{Origin} is academic and
creative, and each \textit{Origin}, emulates the process of Narrative Possibility. The following is an
introduction to the philosophy and practical application of the painting method, Narrative
Possibility, and my commitment to it. It is also a summary of the philosophy and methodology
that, as process, product, event and state, integrates this work. Like the painting process, the
research work is progressive and selective and in this way retains the accepted procedure for
scientific inquiry, but it also brings to the research the spontaneity and intuitive aspects
necessary to an inquiry into and the articulation of Integral Consciousness.

\textsuperscript{17} See Glossary
The *NARRATIVE POSSIBILITY* approach to painting:

I was first moved to paint and write when, in my twenties, a neighbor invited me for a quick morning coffee. This meeting, between an educated, bohemian, silver flute playing, pot growing Dutchman and an unworldly, uninformed young woman, was an event that gave me access to a world previously invisible and unspeakable. When the images and words of Picasso, Chagall, Dali, Appollinaire, Beckett, Joyce and Henry Miller were introduced to me, my way of seeing and methods of communication changed. I have painted (before and after earning a living, while traveling, during marriage, divorce and mothering,) wherever and whenever painting was possible since 1965. I’ve painted late at night, at times all night. I’ve painted into timelessness and past this to disbelief that duration could be measured. I’ve painted with brushes that are merely a hair or two, with brushes old and blunted, with bent over, curved around and straight, staunch new bristles, furs and bits of stick, and with spontaneous sweeps and meticulous almost intangible dabs. I've painted on papers, smooth and crinkled; on chipboard, masonite, treated wood and bits of stick; on plaster, clay, canvas, linen, silk, and on glass. I've used Narrative Possibility as a means of expressing the internal and external experiences of my life, and when I'm painting I hear myself singing.
The approach to painting I have called ‘Narrative Possibility’ is a move towards Integral Creativity. It is not narrative in the traditional sense, it is not simply a story or an impression expanded according to rules of deduction or plot, and it is not a story that is experienced, discovered, or uncovered, sequentially, and yet, paradoxically, it is sequentially coherent. Narrative Possibility begins with forms found in an initial wash of coloured pigment, and as there is no pre-conceived goal, the narrative only becomes apparent through the application of paint and, when deemed appropriate, through its further application. Each possible form prompts inquiry and through discernment the selection of form prompts not only further inquiry but responsibility and perceivable connection: the story is a dichotomy relayed and created within subtle, but not necessarily logical, boundaries. Within layers that offer change, the story proceeds by inquiries and actions that continually create new relationships and interconnections: information gathering and explanation are secondary. In this process, an image, and its part in the whole, is developed in movement so that any static interpretation is released, and the question of purpose left open. Narrative Possibility also requires that some of the relationships within the story are formed and abandoned, and are thus of a temporal nature, while others, apparently consistent, alter or appear to alter when they are subsumed in new relationships. It’s a process of movement that sometimes requires letting go of one possibility before it has become tangible, and becoming aware of and realising another. It’s a process in which new connections generate different connections with, but without oppositions between, whatever is original and whatever is possible, by prompting glimpses of the old and the new simultaneously. Like poetry, Narrative Possibility requires a way of seeing and a method of telling and showing that is different: what may seem irreconcilable or even paradoxical can be integrated when internal balance, appropriate fit and connection are determined according to insight and reason, and the content of the narrative is perceived as complex and multi-dimensional and its movement is up, down, in, and around.

*The Tryst* (see p. 6.) is an example of Narrative Possibility. I give many other visual examples and verbal explanations of this painting method within the written text of this paper in relation to the argument that Western Society has an almost ‘exclusive reliance on the mental structure of consciousness’, and our virtual ignorance of the other structures of consciousness which constitute us. I have assumed that the process of Narrative Possibility requires and manifests an integrative experience of creativity, that it also integrates product, process, state and event. In this context the meanings I attribute to these terms are relevant: a ‘Creative Product’ is a tangible thing that is not final, not closed, and in a postmodern sense it points beyond itself and remains open to further involvement, potential, interpretation, experience (including the interpretation of intangible experiences), and change. The ‘Creative Process’ is a way of thinking, making and meaning making, and a method of communication with makes visible and integrates ‘ways of knowing’ associated with other structures, stages, and states of consciousness. The ‘Creative State’ is a state of mind, it is a state of inner stillness through

---

19 B Herrnstein Smith, *Poetic Closure: a Study of How Poems End*, Uni. of Chicago Press, London, 1968, p.34, cited in J Hawthorn, *A Concise Glossary of Contemporary Literary Theory*, Edward Arnold, London, 1994, explains that closure ‘may be regarded as a modification of structure that makes stasis, or the absence of further continuation, the most probable event. Closure allows the READER to be satisfied by the failure of continuation or, to put it another way, it creates ‘the expectation of noting’ in the reader’. p. 22.
which outer action and expression became form, and, therefore, it is a state of awareness and contemplation, and a ‘Creative Event’ is a transition.  

I have presented this particular painting here in the introduction as a representation of a potential event of significance. In Narrative Possibility, and in my life experiences, rather than offering explanation, proof, or alternative interpretation, meetings reveal other, and create new, connections.

Methodological summary

In Western societies, in the early years of the 21st century, it is almost a cliché to reiterate the need for personal, societal, and environmental change, and there are models and methods abounding that claim ways and means to achieve certain solutions and goals. In regards to personal change, the search for help has already been physically, emotionally and spiritually catered for in the richly disparate collections of self-help books, the proliferation of meditation and relaxation techniques and the increased use of home grown, and prescribed medicinal substances and substitutes. But in practice nothing has produced the individual or collective change in thought-style and life-style that is necessary if the crisis of our times and our world is to be addressed.

The need for change, and the predominance of the rational structure of consciousness in today’s Western civilisations are inexorably linked. Ironically, it is through the thought processes and methods of expression that are exemplified by this structure that both the academic content of this work and ‘other ways of knowing’ must be articulated if it is to adhere to traditional academic criteria. Making a difference, however, surely requires a way of ‘thinking’ and ‘making’ that is different, and as thinking and making are an imperative of this work, I have employed a non-traditional method of researching, recording and communicating in this work, Narrative Possibility, an introduction to, and a move towards, Integral Creativity.

Of the many proponents of an Integral approach (Integral Ecology as proposed by Global Integral Research, Integral Conversations, a means of spreading ideas suggested by Alan Combs, and Willian G Braud's Transpersonal Research Methods for the Social Sciences (to name only a few) I have quoted Ken Wilber's ideas extensively in my work and my academic methodology has been influenced by his four quadrant and synthetic model of Integral Consciousness. But rather than a horizontal/vertical model just like Wilber's, I have created

---

21 My main interest is in a ‘change of consciousness’. Perspectival (See Glossary) consciousness denies the interconnections inherent in the present environmental, ecological, economic, social, political and spiritual crises.
23 Global Integral Research, assessed 5 April 2003,
http://www.gircorp.org/docs/T119/integral_ecology.htm
24 A Combs, Integral Conversations, assessed 28 March 2003,
http://www.integralage.org/docs/Combsintegral.html
26 See Originone p. 39.
and interwoven a form informed by a diversity of layers, and rather than a synthesis of these layers or as Rohit Mehta calls it ‘a construction of the mind’, 27 I have undertaken a work of integration. As Mohit says:

Integration is not a construct of the mind. In the state of integration one enters a new dimension of living. It is truly a fundamental transformation or psychological mutation. 28
It is in integration that the whole resides. The integrity of anything…maybe an object, a person or an event…indicates its wholeness.29

I have not attempted an overview of the ‘spectrum of consciousness’ 30 as Wilber has, or undertaken to retrace the historical documentation of the changes in consciousness, archaic, magical, mythical and mental/rational as Gebser has, but I have presented my method of Narrative Possibility as a potential means of integrating different, manifested and manifesting, worldviews and structures of consciousness. By presenting, exploring and integrating subjective, intersubjective and objective layers, I have unfolded a composite journey through texts (by deconstructing and assembling improvised and selected prose and poems, remembered narratives, academic critiques, histories and ideological recognition); images; the documentation, representation, and implementation of the process of Narrative Possibility, and the story of the journey itself. I have often used the term 'story' in this work rather than the traditional word 'thesis' for several reasons (the least of which is to question the notions of good and bad knowledge). I am using 'story' to mean 'showing and telling', and this includes the 'way' we communicate our understanding, glimpses, and insights; the way we see and hear and articulate and record our ideas and ideals, through religions, sciences, theories, and models; the way we communicate our experiences (both spontaneous and remembered, and both physical and spiritual), our feelings, reasonings, imaginings, and our dreams, and the way we document our findings. In the context of my written research, however, a story is also a medium through which ‘ways of knowing’ and internal and external experience (physical, emotional, mental/rational and spiritual,) may be explored and translated into approximations by the limitations and illusions inherent in language. (Although I am aware that language demands interpretation and thus factual and fictional possibility, I love words and the stories they can tell. I think that words can make our minds dance, that they have the power to connect, invoke, effect and change but that most of the time they merely inform.)

In keeping with the philosophy and the practice of Narrative Possibility, my general Integral Methodology is composed of layers or stories that are a malleable instrument able to reveal and connect different points of view. Footnotes are integral, and I have used the Oxford system of referencing. I recognise that written communication and the reproduction of images cannot convey simultaneity or immediacy; that they are the external tools of documentation and although I must employ them they too are the focus of research as recorded expressions of consciousness and its articulation. When directly addressing Integral Consciousness and

27 According to R Mehta, The Secret of Self-Transformation, Motilal Banarsidass, Madras, 1987: there is, indeed, a world of difference between synthesis and integration. The former is a construct of the mind. The mind, in order to understand anything, breaks it into parts. It can only proceed by analysis. That is the way of science and the way of the intellect. p. 78.
29 Mehta, The Secret of Self-Transformation, p. 82.
30 In all his work, Wilber includes, psychic, subtle and causal as transpersonal domains of human consciousness, I acknowledge their presence but have not made them the focus of my research.
Spirituality, however, my genuine inspiration, as my work asserts, has both internal and external impetus, and the works of Jean Gebser, Ken Wilber and Terry Sands have provided a context, a way of introducing ‘other ways of knowing’ and being.

As *Narrative Possibility, an introduction to, and a move towards, Integral Creativity* is not a traditional thesis in form and content, and integrates many layers, I am giving only a partial synopsis of the eight chapters or *Origins* that comprise this research. Like the painting process my work begins with chaos, rather than fragmentation and, in sequential chapters, moves to detail and clarity. Thus, although the first three chapters are primarily background, they, like Narrative Possibility, provide the context for the inquiry.

In the first three chapters I present an array of colour and possibility. In *Originone*, I approach the concept of origin and originality from several perspectives thereby presenting different aspects or hues of Origin and Creativity. In keeping with an Integral approach and Gebser's interpretation of Origin, I have opened this chapter by configuring his words to form the number eight, the number that is, according to Gebser, symbolic of perspectival consciousness. Perspective, or the ‘eighth art’, is ‘an unconscious expression of wakefulness and illumination’. However, as perspectival vision and thought locates and determines the observer as well as the observed it can confine us within spatial limitations. I have placed his aperspectival words in a perspectival framework to signify the integration of perspectives, and the integration of background and foreground or the positive and negative from which form is conceived. According to Gebser, the positive result of perspective is ‘a concretion of man and space, the negative result is the restriction of man to a limited segment where he perceives only one sector of reality’. In *Originone*, I have also emulated a form that is not limited by the vanishing point of linear perspective, by including concepts, attitudes and approaches that are salient today, along with examples of creative writing, personal experiences, and a further introduction to Integral philosophy.

Following the initial wash and the first found forms it is essential, in a Narrative Possibility painting, that communication and discernment are implemented in the continuing process. Similarly, in *Origintwo* the primary focus is communication. In this chapter I inquire into the process of communication as it occurs through the presently inculcated methods of exchange, and broach the possibility of finding a new and different practice to convey the inclusive structure of Integral Consciousness. I have approached the making and meaning of texts, particularly the ambiguities that are pervasive in our present Western correspondence, and the challenges inherent in finding a form of communication to articulate integrality, and argue, as Gebser has, that our present and past forms of communication need to be clarified. I also point to the differences apparent in the Integral philosophy of Wilber and Gebser, specifically as they refer to structures of consciousness. Although Wilber is right when he points out that in certain traditional cultures other ways of ‘making meaning’ (appropriate to mythical or magical structures of consciousness) are still operative, I do not accept his premise that the mental/rational is the only structure that can tolerate structures other than itself, and, according to context and perspective, interpret them. In Wilber’s view, the mental/rational structure is superior and he places its position, both historically and hierarchically, as necessary to further

evolution. However, I agree with Gebser when he makes it clear that all structures of consciousness can and do continue to present other ‘ways of knowing’ and rather than being transcended by new modes, their expression must be made present and integrated.

As painting is the medium of expression most salient to my research, the focus is image in *Originthree*, and this chapter is a further inquiry into visual forms of art and communication. Specifically, it looks at creativity, skill, and talent, and contemporary interpretation of these terms and their relationship. It is also an overview of the life and work of artist Andrew Wyeth, and an account of my impressions of, and responses to, his painting. I have included an introduction to the practical methods and materials he employs in his paintings, but I have relied on his words to give insight into his thoughts about his work and the emotional content of his art. In comparison, I have described my own method of painting and the historical development of Narrative Possibility. Finally, *Originthree*, presents the comparative views of Wilber and Gebser on Integral Art, creativity and interpretation.

In *Originfour* I examine the method and the findings of my research to this point, and outline the differences and similarities in my research process and Narrative Possibility paintings. Following this reflective work I argue the legitimacy of my methodology. As I have done in the previous chapter, in this chapter I continue to emulate certain aspects of the Narrative Possibility process. In particular, *Originfour* is an example of the reflection and discernment necessary at the stage of a painting when certain forms are overlaid with paint so that the potential is made for new forms to be found and integrated, while others continue to be relevant. As in the painting process, my research now seeks to find connection, and is completed by the introduction of Leonard Shlain’s ideas and work, which comprise the new form to be brought to the fore in the next chapter, *Originfive*.

Leonard Shlain has developed a theory of communication in which he postulates that our left and right brain’s functions are specific but complementary. The integration of these functions achieves wholeness, according to his premise, and ‘waits the next stage of evolution’. When, in the course of my research, the opportunity arose for me to attend lectures conducted by Shlain on the topic of communication and right/left brain dichotomy, I considered it a necessary next step and traveled to Paris to hear him speak. Thus, *Originfive* is an account of a journey, a further inquiry into communication, expression and perception, and ‘ways of knowing’.

In order to provide a background to, and a layer of, my research, *Originsix* is an overview of my personal history as painter, teacher, and explorer. It covers a period of twenty years from 1984 to the present and focuses on the influences and events that contributed to and sometimes changed my lifestyle and thoughtstyle.

As I am a self-taught artist, my teaching methods are not conventional, and like my painting method the Creative Art Group that launched my teaching experience was not developed from preconceived ideas. Unlike the necessary structure of an education system, my small groups were able to cater for individual needs, and *Originsix* gives an insight into the developments and successes of my method as group teacher, the evolution of my own work, and my transition to my present work with private students: children and adults. This chapter brings to attention the importance of ‘meeting’ (referred to on p. 1.), and covers the idea and application of David Bohm’s approach to dialogue and the work of Terry Sands.

Originseven looks closely at the philosophy and practical application of Narrative Possibility; it presents Narrative Possibility images and the scanned and recorded evolution of students’ work. It first shows their work as it evolves from a chaotic wash of coloured pigment, then shows the overwashes and found forms, the selection and integration of forms, and the detail which is necessary to bring the forms to clarity. As with the painting method, this chapter now gives detail to Narrative Possibility and Integral creativity, by arguing its place in the context of Integral Consciousness, and Integral Art.

Origineight is not the sum of previous chapters, but it contains and gives further clarification to some of the significant forms, and, although some initial forms are no longer visible, I contend that they continue to be foundationally present. While addressing the imbalance of our present Western world-view, I look again at some commonly accepted theories of creativity and children’s visual expression and communication. I revisit Wilber’s model of consciousness and his explanation of Vision Logic and Gebser’s repudiation of structured hierarchy, and I present an alternate view. I reiterate the premise that the dominance of the rational (perspectival) structure of consciousness denies our creative potential and our ability to integrate ‘other ways of knowing’. Finally, I propose an adjunct to the present educational system and the process of creative research by stating that Narrative Possibility employs both critique and creativity, and that it is a potential move towards Integral Creativity.

This work was undertaken in a milieu of curiosity,
in a state of not knowing what was
expected or what to expect,
in the vulnerability and necessity of suspended
outcomes (personal and communal),
in an attitude of openness, and
with the understanding that words and images have conveyed
the context, significance and experience, of this research
as it was prompted into manifestation.
Origin
is ever present.
It is not a beginning, since
all beginning is linked with time.
And the present is not just the
“now,” today, the moment
of a unit of time.
It is
ever-originating,
and an achievement of full
integration and continuous renewal.
Anyone able to “concretize,” i.e., to realize
and effect the reality of origin and the
present in their entirety, supersedes
“beginning” and “end” and the
mere here and
now. ¹

ORIGINONE (a)

The opening quote is from the Preface of Jean Gebser’s *The Ever-Present Origin*, his treatise on ‘the visibly emerging perception of reality throughout the various ages and civilizations’. The *Ever-Present Origin* is Gebser’s interpretation of an emerging Integral Consciousness and the integration of the Archaic, Magical, Mythical and Mental/Rational perceptions of reality. I have chosen his words (and formatted them) to acknowledge Origin as the source of creative integration.

In its entirety *Narrative Possibility: an introduction to, and a move towards, Integral Creativity* must also acknowledge Origin from other approaches and therefore its forms are diverse. To convey ORIGIN in form, I have had to rely on format. Hence the work is composed of ORIGINS, and each of these is composed of text (sometimes with interludes of image) which, in order to display continuity and difference, have specific character. These characters are initialed (a), (b), (c) etc. and they are central to my Integral Methodology. In ORIGINONE they are aspects of potential.

According to Raymond Williams in *Keywords* (1983), the word origin (as it has been commonly used in the English language since the fourteenth century,) means rise, beginning and source. ‘In all its early uses origin had a static sense, of some point in time or some force or person from which subsequent things and conditions have arisen’. And while original developed extra senses, origin has kept this ‘inherently retrospective sense’. From the word origin, original presented the idea of original sin, original law, and original text and ‘in the sense of an original work of art (as distinct from a copy)’ the term was attributed to an individual. By the eighteenth century an Original was something rare and unique which, coming from its vital root, arose from genius and grew. An Original was not made from existing material, and was not mechanical, it grew from something within itself, and was not simply a product of Art, or skillful labor. Originality was then used to praise art and literature ‘not by comparison with others, or by a standard, but ‘in its own terms’. In its present use Originality ‘lost virtually all contact with origin; indeed the point is that it has no origin but itself. Original, however, has maintained both senses: the retrospective use and the description of something that is new and (usually) significant’.

Several of the images referred to, and several pieces of text, have been assigned an approximate or exact date. These are dated according to their place in the unfolding

---

2 Gebser, *The Ever-Present Origin*, p.xxvii
3 Although their character is different they should not be read or accepted as fragments, and they do not form a synthesis. According to Mehta: there is, indeed, a world of difference between synthesis and integration. The former is a construct of the mind. The mind, in order to understand anything, breaks it into parts. It can only proceed by analysis. That is the way of science and the way of the intellect. p. 78.
4 Young, *Conjectures on Original Composition*, 12, 1759, cited in Williams, p. 230.
5 Williams, p.230.
of this four/five year work, and are a glimpse of history, though they are not always in chronological order, and in the context of research they represent change and duration. For example: in order to show the foundation of my research, and its originating potential, I have introduced ORIGINONE with a Proposal: a piece of work written nearly five years ago to fulfill the requirements of The School of Social Ecology’s initial Phase 1 document. It presents the first thoughts and words, and it draws, because it was required to, a map of the territory to be explored. Although the exploration, and the process, have unfolded and changed this document has remained the nucleus of possibilities. Now re-presented with only minimal editing it includes a postscript that explains two main points absent from the original document. Some other texts have been included as informative layers of my research, and offer brief insights, rather than an author’s whole argument. These have been quoted exactly.

The character Alice, who features in three pieces throughout the work is, as well as being a character in this story, a creative aspect of this research. Alice is familiar, but the wonderful world she inhabits is not the wonderful world of rationality!
This ‘Phase 1 document’ was written in 1998 to meet the formal needs of the School of Social Ecology and is an outline of my methodology. Its methods of communication, the stories within stories and the layers of exchange, which systematically and creatively embody, connect and inform written and visual stories and their reception, are the arena and the method proposed before my research began. It describes:

1. A systematic and general research into theories about creativity via collected data from cultural, social, and objective and individual domains, including detailed documentation of my teaching method.
2. Stories, some retold as life experiences, as events and spaces that have shaped and changed my direction: as painter, as student, as teacher and as a woman committed to change in lifestyle and thought style; and some as life experience created by this story, by this telling. Visual and written cameos will include:
   a. stories of meetings, (physical, emotional, mental and spiritual) with other story tellers, other thinkers and makers and their words and images. I have purposely orchestrated some of these meetings and have usually, although not always, been consciously impressed. Some meetings have been incremental and thus have codetermined my perspective and attitude, particularly in relation to change, ethics, and ideologies, some display synchronicity, some are both significant and spontaneous.
   b. stories about these stories: specifically, stories in support of the possibility of change and creativity. For example I will quote from stories related to Dialogue (David Bohm), Vision Logic and Integral Consciousness (Ken Wilber, Jean Gebser and Terry Sands),
   c. and stories (and poems and prose) that I will make up: while some of these stories contain elements of fact, some will also be researched through memory, and as memories they will be fiction, embroidered and reanimated.
3. A parallel body of work in quotes and footnotes: rather than follow the Harvard method of in-text identification of author, date, and end of text reference pages, I will stretch the Oxford to include extensive footnotes. I intend to use quotes and footnotes within the body of the text:
   a. to cite quotes that I have chosen because the words seem to fulfill the point I wish to make in a voice that is different,
   b. to present quotes that support a point in question or offer another perspective,

---

7 This will support the attitude of A Montuori who writes in ‘Creativity Inquiry: From Instrumental Knowing to Love of Knowledge’ in T Tulko (ed.), Light of Knowledge, Dharma Publishing, USA, 1997, I would like to invite others to view creativity with me through different focal settings, exploring the times, spaces, and knowledge of creativity. But this is a fundamentally different enterprise than entering the debate arena. What I would like to present as an invitation is generally viewed through the adversarial lens of positions and oppositions. It then becomes a challenge to the existing position, an attempt to displace it with my view and invalidate the existing view. p. 196.
c. to include substantial quotes because they qualify and, when necessary, expand context, and content, or explain references from domains I feel ill-equipped to interpret. In the first instance, of course, the quote may be taken from an entirely different context, but will appear to cohere in mine. (This is the nature of collage, adaptation, and appropriation and I need to include and explore this controversial aspect of postmodernism, and its relationship to fragmentation, originality and creativity.) Some extensive quotes in footnotes will be necessary, as they will be an appropriate method or tool to represent, and integrate the perspectives of different domains, these quotes will:

- draw attention to the meaning of words in different contexts. For example, I intend to define, and redefine the term *creativity*, and related terms according to their meaning in the context of my own work, my work with others, and other’s work.
- augment understanding: I consider it essential to have these as part, as a layer within the body of the text, not separate from it. This will, I think, encourage a sort of internal dialogue composed of other views as well as provide a view of the research, its weave and waft: objective and subjective.
- provide a demonstration of meaning as it is altered or enhanced by context: quotes will occasionally, then, be repeated.

4. Presentations of work by students using painting as narrative, and Narrative Possibility. These will be images scanned and documented through (approximately) eight or nine workings and reworking. Recording an image after each working will visually demonstrate change, and the unfolding of each story as it is manifested. Students work, without a preconceived theme or storyline, with colour and organic shapes on paper or canvas, and move, via found narrative, from chaos to order. My work with students will be as collaborator/facilitator in an experiential approach to narrative integration that includes the ‘somatic, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, creative-expressive, spatial and physical relationship, and community aspects of their lives’.  

5 Other images: as illustrative plates.

---


9 I will often refer to my work with children in this work, however where I refer to individuals and those whose work is specific, I have identified them as students.

9 Braud, p. 37.
POSTSCRIPT (2004) Quotes and Footnotes:

Interpretation is both perspectival and contextual and I am aware that my perspective becomes transparent by both the inclusion (and exclusion) of others’ words. The quotes included give perspectival possibilities, and I deem them important.

The contents in footnote form have many possibilities, some are substantial underpinnings, some are transitional events, thus the footnotes are a quadrantal form composed of ideas that cross and crisscross its own and other quadrants’ terrains. It is also the charter that includes some of my divergent and selected tracks. However:

1. The notes are not merely notes. Those included are the notes included, the dotted lines, the marks and the voices, and therefore are, however fragile, the footnotes’ mainstay.

2. The ideas in the notes included are not necessarily incremental: often they were chosen from fragments of ideas found in other authors’ works. But often readings have pointed to other readings and these to other readings and so on. Like dots, some of these can fit together, others have crossed borders and connected so that, incrementally, they became new ideas, and events. Sometimes, however, they’re pseudo meetings, ideas stumbled upon which simply seem to fit in, temporally.

3. Footnotes do not require overarching headings.

4. Some notes are so briefly sketched that they appear only as possible traces, skeletal suggestions, possible whispers and hints of form.

In the context of Narrative Possibility, and in relation to all stories that make-up the footnotes it must be said that the footnotes, and their selection, are essential to this story, and they are not separate. My story and the stories that together form the completed story and the Narrative Possibilities have continued to emerge from the original wash.

Meeting:

The significant nature of ‘meeting’ becomes especially important to my research when understood in the context of a transformative acausal event. In the process of Narrative Possibility, meetings, rather than preconceived notions are necessary and proceed manifestation of form: once all possibilities cohered in chaos and chaos, being colourful, was awash with difference as tangible and as furtive as indigo, brown madder, deep shadow(s), and light (as pale as cream and as dazzling as sunflowers), and thick velvety white and grainy gesso. In this meeting form is unfolded.

---

10 The large chunks of quotes in the body of the text have similar purpose and function, but they are often specific and sometimes are more like overarching headings than the overarching headings.

11 See Glossary
ORIGINONE (c)

The following is from “IT’S ALL BEEN SAID BEFORE” RE-THINKING ORIGINALITY. I have included it here as an example of what is expected of postgraduate research students in relation to originality. For those who intend to follow a traditional approach this document is a comforting guide, but it does little to inspire an untraditional and creative exploration. It was found on the Internet in August 2003. The site originated in 2001:

Excerpt from a forthcoming book on Learning skills for Postgraduate students, Learning Skills Unit, University of Melbourne. 12

Are you struggling with the concept of Originality?

It is not unusual to be plagued by concerns that you have ‘nothing new to say’ and that ‘it has all been said before’. There is an additional fear that others may be concurrently producing similar work or that they may yield results that disprove your findings. These doubts are shared by many postgraduate students as they grapple with the concept of originality. University literature often includes references to the notion that the grading of your thesis will be ‘determined by the presence of ‘originality’ and furthermore, the ‘significant contribution’ that you will make to an existing body of knowledge. To successfully overcome the potential barriers and fear this notion can present, we must remove the uncertainty that surrounds our understanding of the concept of originality and how it applies to our postgraduate work.

Why we worry

Aside from the anxiety that arises from dwelling on the notion that our work will be assessed in part on the basis of originality, further difficulties arise as a consequence of the lack of discussion that occurs between students and supervisors regarding the definition of originality. As Philips and Pugh (1994:62) note, “students and supervisors (may) use the same words to describe different concepts (but may not) discuss with each other the definitions to which they are working”.

This lack of discussion may result in assumptions on both the part of the student and the supervisor. Some postgraduate students find themselves in the positions of believing that they have to develop a ‘whole new way’ of looking at a topic, while their supervisors assume that they understand that it is sufficient to contribute an incremental step in understanding.

Often it is through ‘trial and error’ throughout the different periods of their candidature that students come to understand that what is required may just represent a small step forward. Take comfort in knowing that the element of originality in your own research is, realistically, likely to be ‘small’, highly original research is very unusual. (Baxter, Hughes and Tight, 1998:13). While you may perceive your contribution to be ‘small’, remember that it remains an original contribution - and that you may not be the best person to judge your work’s significance.

Re-thinking originality
As identified by Cryer (1997:145), reassessing and developing originality is a threefold process: “You need to appreciate the fullness and richness of what originality means …how it might be interpreted and how it might manifest itself. You need to learn and use creative skills to develop it. You also need to allow a considerable incubation period for these skills to function effectively”.

Ask yourself the following questions:
Am I:
• setting down a major piece of new information in writing for the first time?
• continuing a previously original piece of work?
• carrying out an original piece of work designed by my supervisor?
• providing a single original technique, observation or result in an otherwise unoriginal but competent piece of research?
• presenting many original ideas, methods and interpretations all performed by others but under my direction?
• showing originality in testing someone else’s idea?
• carrying out empirical work that has not been done before?
• making a synthesis that has not been made before?
• using already known material but with a new interpretation?
• trying out something in my country that has previously only been done in other countries?
• taking a particular technique and applying it in a new area?
• bringing new evidence to bear on an old issue?
• being cross-disciplinary and using different methodologies?
• looking at areas that people in the discipline have not looked at before?
• adding to knowledge in a way that has not previously been done before?

Upon asking these questions of your research, it should be possible for you to identify that your research is almost certainly original in some way. If you have asked these questions and still can not find the ‘originality’ within your work, then seek further advice from your supervisor. Additionally, don’t forget to talk to your colleagues, peers, family and friends. These are people who probably know you best and they often provide useful sounding boards as you grapple
with many of the issues that confront you as you undertake your postgraduate studies.

Open your mind: enhance your creativity
A further tip that is central to this process of ‘re-thinking’ is to remember that it is our own creativity that is the key to assessing originality.

If you are having trouble perceiving or developing originality within your research, then perhaps it is time to exercise your creativity actively and effectively. Sometimes it can be our own perceptions that blind us to alternative and constructive options.

Try the following strategies and techniques suggested by Carter, Bishop and Kravits (1996:144-145) to access your creativity and discover your own originality.

- Assume a broad perspective…this will allow you to think widely about your research as opposed to thinking about it from a pre-conceived position
- Spend time around innovative people whose thinking inspires you
- Give yourself time…it is important to recognise that originality is a developing process. As you continue with your research, you will realise that there are many different definitions and ways in which your work demonstrates originality, all of which will be acceptable
- Gather varied input: expand the material you can use to build a creative idea or solution
- Don't get hooked on finding the right answer
- Don't always be logical
- Break the rules sometimes
- Be impractical…sometimes too much emphasis on practicality can narrow the scope of your ideas
- Be open to playing…people often think of ideas when they are trying not to think about their research. It is often when your mind ‘is at play’ that it is easier to generate new thoughts.
- Engage in regular brainstorming sessions
- Let yourself think freely…what seems like a crazy idea might turn into a brilliant discovery
- Don’t fear failure…it can open your mind to new possibilities and reveal to you the value of critical thinking
- Always consider yourself creative…use positive self-talk.

For further advice and information on creativity and originality, see the following resources:

**How to Research**, USA, Open University Press.


The Story: making it up

In the beginning of a narrative we have this much in common: we are entering an unqualified and unquantified space. The space before us is both a thing and a state. It is a space of essential innocence and solitude, but it is not static, or empty. It is, for want of fresher comparisons, a whirl of unwritten words, a temptingly prepared canvas, an absent context. But, although its effect is initially unquestionable, one or two words and a mind might be smitten by comparative words. One colour, and the stretched, sanded, satiny surface of the gesso-sealed cotton-duck may be postulating an image. And isn’t it vaguely familiar?

If the alternate beauty of chaos confounds us, and if we are also attached to arrangement, we will undertake to make something of it: participate. We might, of course, form an impression immediately. We might see, after only the first half of the first sentence, an old familiar Alice, but realise by the end of the second a difference in illusion and allusion. Alice, it is true, might be dressed in faded, not Disneyed, blue dress and white starched pinafore, but her feet (she sits close enough to the riverbank for her legs to dangle over it), are courted in red, so that shades of Moira and Dorothy and hints of Papal Power may also be surmised. And yes! She’s not reading, as we’ve always pictured her, but dancing in the air. Is this The Lewis Carol Wonderdance, The Hans Christian Anderdance or The What’s His Name Is He From Kansas, After-Rain-Dance?

If nothing of this makes any sense please accept my word that: the foot covering, in this context, is purely incidental. No sole, toe, arch, heel, sock, stocking, boot or shoe has rhythmically or ritualistically united air and ground, at this particular time, on this imaginary riverbank. There’s no pointing; there’s an absence of motive and measure! There’s no heel-clicking; there’s an absence of urgency, and an absence of advantage!

Before this magnificent expanse of somethingness Alice has just now wholeheartedly accepted, with humility and curiosity, a most curious and radically perplexing imprint of her human nature: she yearns to look into it and ask. What she sees as well as what she makes of it, is what really matters.
ORIGINONE (e)
(or the discovery of a paradox...)

I am a part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro’
Gleams the untravell’d world, whose margin fades
For ever and for ever when I move.

Alfred Lord Tennyson, ‘Ulysses’

In the mid-eighties, while living in the United States, I was invited to spend a day or two
with students at a school in Wilmington, Delaware. A new art complex had just been
‘actualised’ in Tower Hill School: a grand conglomerate of dark rooms, light rooms,
computer and technological laboratories and a comprehensive reference library. Replete
with a philosophy which posited an ideal of ‘enticing students to be involved in the
mysteries of creativity, to join with open minds the frustrating search for order and
beauty’, it adopted the premise that ‘Good Art Programs create Beginnings’. I saw, at
the time, the value of the school’s commitment as articulated in the points listed:

- Art is not a product, but a way of experiencing the world and growing creatively
- The process of making art requires a critical awareness in all aspects of experience
- Creating art demands a synthesis of knowledge, experience and feeling, thus
  contributing to a sense of wholeness
- Creativity functions with equal value in all walks of life
- Art is for every child, not just the talented few.

Although these ideals seemed fine, and still do, I continue to discover, when working
alone or with students, that they are not quite fine enough: what seems obvious and
natural is not necessarily so. I did not question, then, whether an ideal program
frustrates or even denies the process: whether an ideology implies limitations, clear
definitions and boundaries which support the status-quo, or whether a program dulls or
obscures the elusive, undefinable, necessary edge of creativity and the agility and
fragility of openness and spontaneity. I do now. Searching for order and beauty does
seem acceptably safe, encountering the new is different. But now there is much in the

14 Tower Hill School Magazine, Wilmington, Delaware USA, 1984, Autumn
15 Tower Hill School Magazine,
16 Tower Hill School Magazine,
17 Tower Hill School Magazine
18 Althusser talks of ideology as a ‘material practice’ in this sense: it exists in the behavior of people
acting according to their beliefs. L. Althusser, Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays, tr. Ben
1980, p. 57.
above, and in associated events, to contemplate: something more than a Good Art Program is needed to create Beginnings.

It had never been my intention to teach or to entice students to be involved in anything: I am a self-taught painter, and to me ‘a good art program’ is an anomaly. But this was not an invitation attributable to my artistic achievements. Even in the Australian Art Scene, I was peripheral. Although my work was respected in Northern New South Wales, and found a niche in trendy Melbourne, on the real edge, I was not cutting it. “Your work is rather whimsical and naïve,” a frame-maker explained to me, “you'll never be a ground-breaker!”

The invitation to teach came after an encounter, a meeting, an introduction, and a family with a son attending Tower Hill who thought it might be fun and approached the Principal. We had been in America for eighteen months: my fifteen-year-old son, my two daughters, twelve and ten, and me. And we were, thanks to the curiosity and the enthusiasm of certain American people, a curiosity. These people (still embracing, and in their view proving, the American Dream and still besotted by the seventies,) took us to heart: they saw in us, I think, something they did not understand but wanted to experience. Our story, of course, was incredulous! We had arrived with one-way tickets, a meager purse, no contacts, and a dream as unlikely and as grand as any modern narrative. We had also been given, by a Honolulu Customs Man, a miracle: a twelve months visa! “Lady,” he'd said, nodding in all directions at the exuberant children, “you deserve a break.”

And when that dilemma reappeared we were given an extension! That I never actually met, face to face, the artist who unwittingly provided the impetus for the opening chapters of the story, was, by the time of the invitation, passé.

The original impetus, for the travel, was enfolded in an interview on television one Sunday afternoon in Spring. It prompted me to sell whatever was salable, including the children’s bikes and toys; it aroused me to the possibility of meeting a living master, and it fortified my parents to doubt my sanity. That urge unfolded into four airline tickets and two nights prepaid accommodation at the Ramada Inn, Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania. A small transit bus drove us from the airport, it was evening and already dark. That first night was the first night of American winter and the first night of sleet. This must be a beginning.

(If this were a painting, I would probably almost paint it out now. I would take a thick brush, fill it with gesso and white over the picture before washing colour again on the traces of these foundations and, then I would look deeper.)

Route 266 is icy. It’s a wide, busy, icy highway and it separates this huge multistory motel and a McDonald's. There's no other building in view, no other entrances but somewhere, out of sight, there must be exits for Mac-craving car-borne travelers and motor inn visitors. For pedestrians like us it’s practically a mirage. But it’s warm inside:
there’s countless channel-clicking, extravagant room service, a telephone and a telephone book. And in early December, a few days after landing and just before panic, snow-binding pessimism and any semblance of a budget was carried away on empty trays of constantly ordered pacifiers, an agent finds us rooms in a private house, and I can use the kitchen. There are shops nearby, and we buy brown paper-bags full of food and fleecy-lined boots, scarves, gloves, overcoats padded with down and children’s hats with earflaps. This might also be a beginning!

When I accepted the invitation and began to work with the children at Tower Hill School, it was not the first time I’d shared my love of painting with children in America.\(^{19}\) It was, however, somewhat like my first School Formal, and when I entered the auditorium on shaky legs an expanse of quietly controlled anticipation awaited me: the immaculately polished floor was mine, and I was expected to perform. Unaware that this was to be a significant event for me, and essentially enticed by the boon which would bridge the financial gap that would enable us to return home, I had fronted-up as, and to, a novelty. Regardless of purpose or ideal I found myself to be part of the program, and until I looked at my shoes and imagined that they were red, I thought I’d forgotten how to dance.

\(^{19}\) I had applied for, and acquired, the position of Art Coordinator at the summer camp, Circle Pines. The advertisement read:

Unit camp for children aged 8-15 provides two or more weeks of fun and adventure while working together as a cooperative community. Though grouped in three units, the campers share decision making for how they will live and play with ample opportunity with interaction between all ages. The daily flow of camp activities enhances the creative and cooperative energies of children. Work Projects each morning give children the opportunity to learn to work together for the benefit of all. Acorns (8-10) work one hour, Juniors (11-13) work two hours and Youth (13-15) work three hours. After work Acorns and Juniors must take instructional swim and may earn Red Cross badges. Afternoons provide the opportunities to learn creative skills in drama, art, nature, water safety and group recreation. Many campers enjoy the hot afternoons at the beach while some relax with special friends or find a favorite spot to watch the clouds float by. Some evenings are spent with unit activity... playing games, singing around the campfire, preparing skits or sharing the customs of other cultures. Special adventures such as overnight hikes and rock-climbing at the Grand Ledges help campers discover how to deal with fears and embarrassments, gaining strength and determination from the full support of everyone. (with parent’s permission). Circle Pines Center, Michigan, U.S.A, Summer 1984.

We arrived at this beautiful place, not far from Kalamazoo and near Lake Michigan for a six-week placing without pay, but with full accommodation for us all. For a few hours each day my work was in the kitchen, but for the rest of the time I was ‘teaching’ in the studio.
Because this work must manifest in time and space it is a hesitant beginning. A restless, chaotic, growing urgency to share, and a sense akin to loss and vulnerability, initiates the first mark. When the first mark is visible, however, this state will not be evident, but it will have provided the opportunity and the material potential for a form that can describe. In the action of making the next mark an ordering and a journey come into focus, simultaneously. It is pertinent, I think, to acknowledge that this is the milieu in which inquiry often originates for me: it precedes exploration in both paint and word, and becomes the impetus to proceed. It is also important to acknowledge that this (now abstractly remembered loss of word, of form, of previous knowledge and experience, of any suitable starting point, of the necessity to act,) gives me again, a curiously certain but fragile trust in chaos.

Whatever the similarities to other hesitant beginnings, this one is taking place on a blue-skies-not-smiling-at-anyone day, a Sunday, a gray and unable to warm, mid-winter-metaphor, in Canberra. And, it is unique. With its own focus and what seems to be its own starting point in time, this work is already charting its own course. It must.

This is not an intended beginning. It is, paradoxically, both the creative ground and the breaking of the ground. The first thoughts are turned here.

I am obviously not yet surrounded in books. But I intend, in due course, to pursue, compare, and document this elusive, potentially explosive, delicate and vulnerable, balancing act of art and craft and innocence, this living and integrating experience called creativity.

Art and creativity share a fine relationship, but change, the nature and the necessity of change, and creativity are intricately connected. My search for this connection was motivating me more than twenty years ago, before I knew what it was I was looking for. This is the story, and the continuation, of that search.
The title of this work and its working focus is *Narrative Possibility: an introduction to, and a move towards, Integral Creativity*. Its charter and media are text: word and image in study and story. As a participant, an observer, a researcher and a storyteller, I am looking at, presenting, and opening to creativity and its communicative aspects through products, processes, events and an extemporaneous state that depends, at least in part, on the absence of definite rules. I am researching, representing and employing these integral aspects of creativity. These aspects, exterior and interior, individual and collective, involve more than descriptions, models, theories, analysis, argument or comparisons. Although creativity is recognisable according to constructed criteria: social systems, conceptual values and cultural conventions in tactile reality, it is also accepted as an abstract, a potentiality, within the manifestation of order, or reality, to be, and it is a story in the making. Essentially then, as thinking and making are synergetic, this work cannot be exclusively about creativity, I cannot look at, or present its integrality as if it is simply an outer, or a separate story. It's not. Creativity and its interpretation are complex, and its study and story requires a choir of voices, a comprehensive repertoire, the flexibility and range to move, and the capacity to hold a tune while participating in chaos.

**Points of Departure: creativity, cant and cantata**

The history and complexity of meanings, conscious changes, or consciously different uses; innovation, obsolescence, specialisation, extension, overlap, transfer; or changes which are masked by a nominal continuity so that words which seem to have been there for centuries, with continuous general meanings, have come to express radically different or radically variable, yet sometimes hardly noticed, meanings and implications of meaning.  

It is necessary, for greater understanding, to establish that the term *creativity* has historical relevance, and that changes in meaning exemplify changes in worldview. Raymond Williams says that words that involve ideas and values, as *creativity* does, go beyond the range of 'proper meanings' so that a simple definition is not only an impossibility, it's an irrelevant procedure. Williams explains that the English word *create* underwent a change of meaning during the Renaissance. Before this, the word was used in the precise context of the original divine creation of the world, and therefore always referred to 'something having been made, and thus to a past event'. With the 'major transformation of thought which we now describe as the humanism of the Renaissance', the meaning was extended to 'indicate present or future making...that is to say a kind of making by men'. *Creativity* was coined, after both *create* and *creation* had general acceptance in relation 'to human actions, without necessary reference to a past divine event'. By the nineteenth century it had respective meanings, associated with art and thought: it was conscious, powerful, and conventional. In contemporary society

---

20 See Glossary
21 Williams, p. 17.
*creativity* is the general name for this faculty, but although there are obvious difficulties, as Williams points out: ‘such difficulties are inevitable when we realise the necessary magnitude and complexity of the interrelation of human activity which *creative* now so indispensably embodies’.  

The history of words provides a surface insight into conceptual and contextual changes over time, and words take on very different and controversial meanings in relation to, and within, the linguistic forms of specific cultures and societies. It is useful, therefore, to look at *creativity* both synchronically and diachronically. Perhaps, of all words, creativity is most synonymous with origin. It’s a renaissance term, a divine derivative ‘once intended, and still often intended, to embody a high and serious claim’. But today, in much of the western world, the postmodern world of fragmentation and pastiche, originality and the grand stories of progress and emancipation have fallen from grace and *creative* has taken on new significance: in our secular society the present and future depend on human making and innovation. In today’s Western worldview, this has become the story of our lives, and paradoxically, it’s a story that includes the premise that ‘the future is a trajectory of creative possibilities’. In our present conventional meanings the term befits the province of the gifted, the educated, the clever, and those who have learned, and (if the old adage is adhered to) learned how to break, the rules. Of course, in common sense, creativity is still a faculty of thought, but the emphasis is on extension and foresight, rather than the activity of imagination, which is the decisive source of the modern meaning.

And when applied to the activity of making, the term denotes ‘practices for which, in the absence of the convention, nobody would think of making such claims’.

*…any imitative or stereotyped literary work can be called, by convention, creative writing, and advertising copywriters officially describe themselves as creative. Given the large elements of simple ideological and hegemonic reproduction in most of the written and visual arts, a description of this kind as creative can be confusing and at times seriously misleading.*

---

22 Williams, pp. 82-84
23 J Rifkin, *Algeny*, Penguin, USA, 1984, at first glance, terms like “perspective,” “scenarios,” “models,” “creative possibilities” appear to signal a newfound awareness by humanity of its own limitations, of its inability ever to grasp or comprehend the truths of the universe. Not so. It is not humility that animates the new cosmological jargon but bravado. When we take a closer look, the new vocabulary suddenly takes on an entirely new appearance, at once menacing and intoxicating. Perspectives, scenarios, models, creative possibilities. These are the words of authorship, the words of a creator, an architect, a designer. Humanity is abandoning the idea that the universe operates by ironclad truths because it no longer feels the need to be constrained by such fetters. Nature is being made anew, this time by human beings. We no longer feel ourselves to be guests in someone else's home and therefore obliged to make our behavior conform with a set of pre-existing cosmic rules. It is our creation now. We make the rules. We establish the parameters of reality. p. 243.
24 Williams, p. 82.
25 Williams, p. 82.
26 Williams, p. 82.
And further, because the term has complexities in both particular and relational meanings it is understood according to domain, and articulated in and by the prevailing ideological construction of its time and context, according to descriptions, models, theories, analyses, and comparisons.27

The most commonly accepted theories of creativity and its products and processes continue to uphold these modernist perspectives of progress and domain. In *The Nature of Creativity*, R.W. Weisberg establishes the criteria for the material results of creativity when he maintains that:

…creative products are firmly based on what came before. True originality evolves as the individual goes beyond what others have done before. This might mean, perhaps paradoxically, that in order to produce something new, one should first become as knowledgeable as possible about the old. This serves to provide the background so the individual can begin to work in an area and also serves to provide ways in which to modify early products that are not satisfactory. These two aspects of creative work, commitment and expertise within one’s own area, are neither profound nor novel. All scientists and artists have extensive training, either formally or informally, and very few individuals make a mark in the world without a relatively long commitment to an area beyond their actual training. 28

And in *Creativity*, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Frank Offner subscribe to the following:

A person who wants to make a creative contribution not only must work within a creative system but must also reproduce that system within his or her mind. In other words, the person must learn the rules and the content of the domain, as well as the criteria of selection, the preferences of the field. In science, it is particularly impossible to make a creative contribution without internalizing the fundamental knowledge of the domain. All scientists would agree with the words of Frank Offner, a scientist and inventor: “The important thing is that you must have a good, a very solid grounding in the physical

---

27 As an example D Bagnal, ‘Australia’s 10 Most Creative Minds’, *The Bulletin*, January 1997, Australians are famously innovative. Just think of the black box and the permanent crease, both Australian inventions. But who among us are truly creative? In our search for Australia’s 10 most creative minds, we asked for more than the ability to take an idea and do something with it. In the first installment of what we plan to make an annual event, we honor resident Australians (and one “honorary one”) whose ideas have a proven track record of causing tremors, of leaping chasms. These are people who, as the eminent biologist Charles Birch told us, look at the same facts as everyone else and draw new conclusions. Creativity does not flourish between solid lines. Those we have nominated are boundary riders. We have dragged our net as widely as possible, but some places proved less rewarding than others. Surprisingly, it proved difficult to find any one creative artist living and working in Australia who had fundamentally redrawn his or her particular terrain. Pickings in business were lean, too. As we often hear, business should foster creativity, but the need to make a profit and to be accountable discourages risk-taking. Any list is selective, and no doubt we have omitted worthy contenders. We would like to think that we could have filled the places many times over, but in fact, we couldn’t. We believe the people we offer are truly exceptional. The list: Paul Davies, Peter Springer, Michael Kirby, Gay Bilson, Pat Dobson, Helen Garner, Michael Leunig, Steve Bennett, Jim Peacock, Ric Charlesworth.

sciences, before you can make any progress in understanding.” The same conclusions are voiced in every other discipline. Artists agree that a painter cannot make a creative contribution without looking, and looking, and looking at previous art, and without knowing what other artists and critics consider good and bad art. Writers say that you have to read, read, and read some more, and know what the critics’ criteria for good writing are, before you can write creatively yourself.  

These approaches have much in common, they agree that creativity instigates change and that it involves awareness and ability. David Bohm however, considers that ‘domains’ (once necessary to keep subjects of study and divisions of labour in manageable proportions) have developed a fragmentary worldview, one in which:

… art, science, technology, and human work in general, are divided up into specialities, each considered to be separate in essence from the others. Although further interdisciplinary subjects, intended to unite these specialities, have been set up these new subjects have ultimately served mainly to add further separate fragments.  

But he adds to creativity the aspect of ‘state’ when he suggests that creativity is a natural potential ‘largely blocked by the way in which civilization has developed’,  that it emerges ‘not as something that is the result of an effort to achieve a planned and formulated goal, but rather as a by-product of a mind that is coming to a more nearly normal order of operation’.  Creativity, according to Bohm, requires a certain quality of originality, a state of mind that is free from conditioning and the confusion that arises from ‘an enormous number of habitually applied preconceptions and prejudices, most of which are absorbed at an early age, in a tacit rather than explicit form’. Bohm refers to a ‘natural state of freedom’ that emerges when an individual discovers that a healthy mind requires one to be continually aware of and alert to the ‘mechanical reactions’ that are the predominate barriers to creativity. He asserts:

…the only way in which originality and creativity can possibly arise, since any effort to reach them through some planned series of actions or exercises is a denial of the very

---

31 Bohm, Changing Consciousness, p. 163.  
32 For a comprehensive account of the fragmentation which has developed in present day societies, see Bohm, Wholeness and the Implicate Order, in which he states that: society as a whole has developed in such a way that it is broken up into separate nations and different religions, political, economic, racial groups, etc. Man’s natural environment has correspondingly been seen as an aggregate of separately existing parts, to be exploited by different groups of people. Similarly, each individual human being has been fragmented into a large number of separate and conflicting compartments, according to his different desires, aims, ambitions, loyalties, psychological characteristics etc. to such an extent that it is generally accepted that some degree of neurosis is inevitable, while many individuals going beyond the ‘normal’ limits of fragmentation are classified as paranoid, schizoid, psychotic, etc. p. 1.  
34 Bohm, On Creativity, p. 25.  
35 Bohm, On Creativity, p. 23.
nature of what one hopes to achieve. For this reason, originality and creativity can develop only if they are the essential force behind the first step.  

The first step, according to Bohm, is for an individual to perceive the difference between mechanical reaction and creative action. What Bohm means by creative is, ‘not merely the ability to produce art and science, but actually to be creative in ordinary, everyday life, in the sense that it is not routinely cut out for you’. Although acknowledging that to awaken the creative state of mind is not easy, Bohm is adamant that it is ‘for each of us individually and for society as a whole the most important thing to be done in the circumstances in which humanity now finds itself’.  

For me, these approaches raise the issue of whether specific knowledge, accumulated experience and rational thought are prerequisites for creativity and change. This too is of particular interest in relation to children and working with children creatively and collaboratively for it calls into question another important aspect, that of hierarchical development: does originality only evolve as the individual goes beyond what they or others have done before?

35 Bohm, On Creativity, p. 25.  
36 Bohm, Changing Consciousness, p. 117.  
37 Bohm, On Creativity, p. 24.
ORIGINONE (h)
Integral Perspectives and Possibilities

Terry Sands, Ken Wilber, and Jean Gebser do not bring to this research any commonly accepted theories of creativity, but their works are exemplars of their general contribution to integral criteria and methodology (though Gebser is aware that integral examples may be limited in expression by the need to follow conventional methods of communication), and have specific relevance to my approach. Their approaches have similarities and differences.

JEAN GEBSER

In a chapter from *The Ever-Present Origin* titled *The Nature of Creativity*, Gebser writes:

> Every statement about creativity is open to doubt. Since creativity is a potency or energy it cannot be grasped systematically and can at best be perceived systatically. Since it is a potency which only rarely manifests itself at full strength, the requisite empirical evidence for comparison is unusually limited. We must also take into account that its manifestations are mostly fragmentary and have a psychic emphasis, so that most statements about it have only limited validity. In any event creativity is more than a creative, imaginary, intuitive, productive, or reproductive element. Its visible effectiveness is achieved where the strength of the inner constellation and the degree of intensity are equal to its potency, that is, where its demand is able to find a response. It is fulfilled in individuals to the same degree as in entire generations to the extent that they are ready for it.

Being ready for it, however, does not necessarily require the prior acquisition of experience or skill. Being ready for it refers to an intensity of consciousness that must not be equated with ‘rational acuity’ or any so called expansion of consciousness. The ‘expansion of consciousness is merely a spatially conceived qualification of consciousness and consequently an illusion’.

---

38 According to G Feuerstein, *Structures of Consciousness*, Integral Publishing, Canada, 1987, Gebser did not want to ‘pin things (and himself) down by furnishing a precise alternative’ to Hegel’s history of consciousness. ‘For the same reason he tends to avoid definitions which are perspectival fixations in the domain of language. In his writing he takes on the formidable task of trying to communicate intelligibly while not allowing himself to be hampered by the rational conventions of our language’. p. 43.

39 See Glossary.


41 See Glossary.

According to Gebser, the accepted criteria for progress, improvement or development, which usually identifies creativity, are allied with a rational approach. Even ‘the view that our epoch and civilization are on a higher plane of development, as propagated by defenders of a progress-thesis, has become tenuous in the light of its application and results’. The rationalistic thought-cliché of “progress” (more often than not a progression away from origin), the biologizing notion of evolution, and the botanizing idea of development are all inapplicable to the phenomenon of consciousness.

To Gebser, creativity is arational and its truest effect is found in mutation, the course of which is not continuous in time, but rather spontaneous, acausal, and discontinuous. Creativity ‘is a visibly emerging impulse of origin which “is” in turn timeless’. Creativity ‘is something that “happens” to us, that fully effects or fulfills itself in us’. These explanations, Gebser acknowledges, makes it suspect to rationalists because:

…the unilaterally intellectual (rational) thinking refers only to the visible, the invisible appears to it by mistake always as irrational since it cannot be concluded. But the rationally calculating human fails to see that the irrational transcends and transforms its inclusiveness into perceptibility.

When *The Ever-Present Origin* was first published in 1953, Gebser was certain that ‘the birth-pangs of the aperspectival, the integral perception of the world began in the first decade of our century’. The proponents of Integral Consciousness commonly accept that this transition is in process, and that this process is itself creative. Algis Mickunas suggests that:

In a peculiar way there appear in historical periods, traumatic times which are suggestive that human consciousness develops non-linearly, develops mutational in such a way that the previous conditions, causal or otherwise, cannot explain the mutation. That is where we begin to talk about the transitional periods wherein the origin of everything appears in its creative force. That is, the transformations of consciousness are not explicable in terms

---


This, according to Gebser, *The Ever-Present Origin*, is characteristic of Western Perspectival consciousness. Perspectival consciousness differs from the pre-perspectival in that it recognises the objective position of the observer. This way of knowing presumes a discontinuity between observer and observed. The individual is no longer intimately connected to the world but stands aloof, in the world but no longer a part of it. p. 4.

44 And although Gebser agrees with the other proponents of Integral Consciousness that an integral approach transcends the limitations of rationality, he considers that, according to Hallford, *Origin, Myth and Mind*, integrality is simply ‘a different way of knowing that reflects a change in the relationship between consciousness and that to which it is directed’. p. 12.


---
of what has gone before, and that what Goethe called the origin itself transfigures consciousness, and in those transitional periods we can see the functioning of the origin in its creative force. Thus, the entire archetological process shows that the presence of the ultimate origin is not extra-worldly, but functions in its creative process here and now.  

KEN WILBER

Although Wilber does not often use the word ‘creativity’ in his writing, it does appear in a general sense. It is only in Integral Psychology (2000), and Sex, Ecology and Spirituality (1995), that he refers to the word as having specific meaning.

In Sex, Ecology and Spirituality his (scientific) analogy is this:

When an oxygen atom and two hydrogen atoms are brought together under suitable circumstances, a new and in some ways unprecedented holon emerges, that of a water molecule. This is not just a communion, self-adaptation, or association of three atoms; it is a transformation that results in something novel and emergent…different wholes have come together to form a new and different whole. There is some sort of creative twist on what has gone before.  

In Integral Psychology, his interpretation is:

…creativity, by any other name, is built into the very fabric of the Kosmos. This creativity…Eros is one of its many names…drives the emergence of ever higher and ever wider holons, a drive that shows up, in the interior domains, as an expansion of identity (and morals and consciousness) from matter to body to mind to soul to spirit. And the proof of that sequence is found, not by staring at the physical organism and its environments, but by looking into the subjective and intersubjective domains.  

And in regards to creativity and art he writes, in Eye of Spirit (1997):

…the entire Kosmos is the Artwork of your highest Self in all its shining creativity, which is exactly why every object in the universe is in truth an object of radiant Beauty when perceived with the eye of Spirit.

TERRY SANDS

In his work Integral Spirituality: A Guide to the New Consciousness, Terry Sands includes an essay that explores the difference between aspiration, inspiration and creative expression. In this he says:

---

51 See Glossary
53 Wilber, Integral Psychology, Shambhala, Boston, 2000, p. 117.
When a true artist moves to work in his or her medium of expression, the inspiration can come first and then the aspiration follows: that is, the vision of that which one wants to do comes first, and then the motivation to do it can be summoned to provide the energy and resources to move to action. The motivation that then produces the action can thus come from a desire to express that which was seen in the moment of inspiration.

For one who is accustomed to living in a competitive world and working towards goals for the purpose of accomplishment and accumulation, it is difficult to work without the definition of something to which one aspires. Aspirations and desires are the things of which life is created, but the truly beautiful, creative, and worthwhile materialisations of life come forth from inspiration first and then the aspiration to see the inspiration is made material. The product of the true artist who has worked from inspiration to aspiration and then to creation is unique: it cannot be duplicated. An attempt to duplicate moves from a position that places aspiration ahead of inspiration.

Sands is suggesting that motivation is usually the effect of an envisioned end result. However, inspiration occurs ‘in the moment’, it is a glimpse rather than an idea and motivation comes from the desire to express that which is fleeting seen. An artist working from this space, he says, ‘works to create rather than complete’.

The above introductions to the work of Jean Gebser, Ken Wilber and Terry Sands, are presented here not only because of their statements about creativity, but because these are statements that are also relevant to their specific approach to Integral Consciousness. In my research I have been most impressed by some but not all aspects of their work. Terry Sands has practiced and studied Religion and Spirituality in India for many years and I have found his work personally helpful since I first met him and was introduced to his work more than twenty years ago. The most influential Western writers (Sri Aurobindo has written extensively from an Eastern spiritual perspective,) on the topic of Integral Consciousness, however, are Jean Gebser and Ken Wilber.

Gebser’s philosophy encompasses two foundational principals: latency and transparency, and his primary concern is with a new reality:

…a reality functioning and effectual integrally, in which intensity and action, the effect and the effective co-exist; one where origin, by virtue of “presentiation,” blossoms forth anew; and one in which the present is all-encompassing and entire.

He is also concerned with the need for a new spiritual attitude; with the intensity of the present transition; with ‘rendering transparent everything latent “behind” and “before” the world, to render transparent our own origin’, with finding a ‘mode of articulation’ which

---

57 See Glossary
58 See Glossary
59 See Glossary (making present)
will give it the requisite clarity, and with creative ‘concretization’ through which the spiritual coalesces with consciousness by an act that integrates, and anchors in actual life what otherwise is merely abstract propositions. According to Ed Mahood Jr, this is an evolution which is ‘neither progress nor development, but crystallization of the invisible in the visible’, and it is a process that is supplementary to evolution as a forward movement. Most evolutionary theories are, however, only partial as they are products of the dominant mental/rational structure of consciousness and therefore can only be understood and expressed according to its tenets. As Gebser points out:

The presently valid evolutionary theories including that of development and progress are hardly older than 100 years. They deal mainly with one part of reality, and that part covers only the most solid, well-in-the fore aspects, since they limit and have to limit themselves to the visible flow of events according to the current scientific working methods and hypothesis, which are all anthropocentric. In the best case…and this is not a criticism but an observation based on the compulsory object orientation and the working methods in science…this evolutionary theory covers half the reality, ie, only the visible and conclusive.

Although Gebser is not denying the importance of what he terms the ‘forward movement’ of evolution, he is not ‘interested in outlining discrete segments, steps or levels of man, but in disclosing the transparency of man as a whole and the interplay of the various consciousness structures which constitute him’. The structures of consciousness that constitute human beings ‘are not developed through linear, historical or evolutionary process, but rather, are co-present in all our situations’. These structures, as Gebser names them, the archaic, magical, mental and the presently emerging integral, are not progressive stages of evolution, as Darwin postulates, they are mutations that ‘occur in a quantum-like, discontinuous leap, rather than a slowly developing and changing framework. They are not simple paradigm shifts but a fundamentally different way of experiencing reality’.

---

62 See Glossary
63 Feuerstein, p. 213.
68 Mickunas, p. 2.
69 Gebser does not rule out evolution as ‘forward movement’ however, as stated above he suggests that this theory of evolution is one-sided covering only visible and conclusive reality.
A true process, Gebser explains:

…always occurs in quanta, that is in leaps; or, expressed in quasi-biological and not physical terms, in mutations. It occurs spontaneously, indeterminately, and, consequently, discontinuously. Moreover, we become aware of such presumably invisible processes only when they have reached sufficient strength to manifest themselves on the basis of their cumulative momentum. 71

The apparent continuity that can be measured is ‘an attempt to structure events for convenient accessibility’, and ‘is no more than a sequence subsequently superimposed onto overlapping events to lend them the reassuring appearance of a logically determined progression’ 72. From Gebser’s perspective, the mutational process that is under consideration is spiritual and it must not be associated with the ‘specialization of functions within a particular environment’ 73 as biological and historical mutations are. In contrast to these mutations, consciousness mutations ‘do not assume or require the disappearance of previous potentialities and properties’, rather they are immediately integrated into the new structure and ‘overdetermined’. 74 As Mahood Jr. puts it ‘the origin, the source from which all springs, is a spiritual one, and all phases of consciousness evolution are a testimony to the ever less latent and ever more transparent spirituality that is inherent in all there is’. 75

Wilber too suggests that ‘the world is in the midst of the torturous birth throes of the collective emergence of an entirely new structure of consciousness’ 76, and readily endorses the ‘groundbreaking work of Jean Gebser in recognizing four major epochs of human evolution, each anchored by a particular structure (or level) of individual consciousness that correspondingly produced (and was produced by) a particular social worldview’ 77. But while acknowledging that the structures of consciousness he uses in his model were inspired by Gebser, Wilber has created a quadrant composed of four evolutionary aspects in which the archaic, magic, mythic, mental/rational and integral form the Lower Left: the interior-collective (cultural) and in place of the word integral, Wilber has substituted centuric.

75 Mahood Jr., http://www.gajamind.org/Gebser.html. p. 3.
76 Wilber, Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, p. 188.
77 Wilber, Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, p. 119. (his italics)
The newly emerging global consciousness of Vision Logic is, according to Wilber, a worldview or worldspace that is ‘existential’ and ‘centuaric’, and a structure that transcends the mental/rational mind and integrates body/mind. However the process of integration and its product is not merely a sum of previous parts, it is not horizontal expansionism, but vertical and creative emergence.

In what Tony Schwartz calls an ‘embracing and comprehensive’ integrative methodology, Wilber employs a four-fold methodology (and a new model of consciousness by which positive possibilities can emerge through, and transcend, the differentiation brought about by postmodernism) to research a topic from all perspectives, that is first-person, cultural, social and third-

---

Wilber, A Brief History of Everything, Shambhala, Boston, 1996, p. 74.
D W MacKinnon, Creativity, North-Holland Publishing Company, London, 1970, says that the: highest criterion for a creative product is seldom met since it requires that the product create new condition for human existence, transcending and transforming the generally accepted experience of man by introducing new principals that defy tradition and change radically man’s view of the world. pp. 24/25
Wilber, A Brief History of Everything, p. 189.
T Schwartz, in the Forward to Wilber, A Brief History of Everything, says:
…the powerful new tool he brings to bear in A Brief History is his notion that there are four “quadrants” of development. By looking at hundreds of developmental maps that have been created by various thinkers over the years…maps of biological, psychological, cognitive, and
person or objective perspectives. Researching a topic from all perspectives is, I believe, an imperative to a ‘comprehensive and embracing’ integrative methodology, but while Gebser and Wilber share similarities of approach, and agree that the collective emergence of an entirely new structure of consciousness is in transition, there are also quite fundamental differences:

1. According to Wilber, three major components form our consciousness: the enduring structures, the transitional structures/stages and the *self*, which is a mediator. Wilber suggests that consciousness corresponds to the interior development of an individual and to external, cultural and social, worldviews.

   …there are the relatively permanent or *enduring* structures- those features that, once they emerge in development, tend to remain in existence, such as linguistic competence, cognitive capacities, spatial coordination, motor skills, and so forth. These enduring structures tend to build upon, and usually incorporate, previous structures in a larger and more integrative pattern.  

But Wilber asserts that to adequately characterise the overall spectrum of consciousness, it is necessary to name nine or ten of what he understands to be the most central and important structures. These he identifies as ‘sensorimotor, phantasmic- emotional, representational, rule/role, formal, vision-logic, psychic, subtle, causal, and non-dual’. But while these basic structures tend to remain in existence, some features of them are temporary or transitional, and are ‘phased out or replaced’. Although our worldviews, self-needs, self-identity, and moral stages are important transitional structures, in Wilber's model it is the distinctions between the enduring and transitional that are of ‘extraordinary importance’.

This distinction is also particularly relevant and important to my research, for while Wilber's model is comprehensive, I am primarily concerned with the creative emergence of a new worldview and its expression. It is Gebser's emphasis, as distinctive to Wilber's, on the co-presence of the archaic, magic, mythical, rational worldviews, that has become most pertinent to my work.

---

spiritual development, to name just a few…it dawned on Wilber that they were often describing very different versions of “truth.” Exterior forms of development, for example, are those that can be measured objectively and empirically. But what Wilber makes clear is that this form of truth will only take you so far. Any comprehensive development, he points out, also includes an interior dimension…one that is subjective and interpretive, and depends on consciousness and introspection. Beyond that, Wilber saw, both interior and exterior development takes place not just individually, but in a social or cultural context. Hence the four quadrants.

None of these forms of truth, he argues in a series of vivid examples, can be reduced to another. A behaviorist, to take a single case, cannot understand a person’s interior experience solely by looking at his external behavior…or at its physiological correlates. The truth will indeed set you free, but only if you recognize that there is more than one kind of truth. p. xiii..

82 Wilber, *The Eye of Spirit*, p. 140.
2. Both Gebser and Wilber, according to Steven Swanson, ‘acknowledge the dominance of the mental structure in the world today’. \(^\text{84}\) Gebser thinks this structure is already shared by all humanity, though he concedes that many people ‘continue to emphasize previous structures of consciousness…the archaic, the magical and the mythical’. \(^\text{85}\)

Wilber ‘believes that a large part of humanity hasn’t yet stabilized in the mental/rational consciousness, and that they need to do so before we can move forward’. \(^\text{86}\) And in order to substantiate this conclusion and the superiority and evolutionary potential of rationality (in comparison to previous structures of consciousness,) Wilber says, ‘rationality is the only structure that can tolerate structures other than itself’, and further ‘it is from the platform of rational pluralism that the next stage, the truly aperspectival-integral (and universal-integral), can be reached’. \(^\text{87}\) And Gebser, that ‘we cannot employ the methods derived from and dependent on our present consciousness structure to investigate different structures of consciousness, but will have to adapt our method to the particular structure under investigation’. \(^\text{88}\)

Wilber’s approach is, of course, hierarchical, a word noticeably missing in Gebser’s vocabulary, but then so is the word ‘postmodernism’ which is absent, according to Wilber, because of Gebser’s death in 1973 prior to ‘the full extent of the explosion of aperspectivism in today’s’ postmodern world. \(^\text{89}\) Nevertheless, Wilber suggests that ‘not only has aperspectival vision-logic defined postmodernity (in its best aspects), it has also defined many of postmodernity’s self-conscious problems: most notably a rejection, or disassociation, of hierarchical differentiation which means that individuals are not only aware of holonic and aperspectival space, but are often totally lost in it’. \(^\text{90}\) And further he claims that because ‘all sorts of theorists, from deep ecologists to social critics, from ecofeminists to postmodern poststructuralists, have found the notion of hierarchy not only undesirable but a bona fide cause of much social domination, oppression, and injustice’. \(^\text{91}\)

When Wilber seeks to explain away ‘the problem of hierarchy’ he presents the contradictions inherent in many contemporary understandings of the term and its relation to perspective:

> That all perspectives interrelate, or that no perspective is final (aperspectivism), does not mean that there are no relative merits among them. The postmodern poststructuralists go from saying “there’s no final perspective” (or “perspectives are boundless”) to saying “therefore there is no advantage in any perspective over another.” This leveling of perspective is not an interrelation of all perspectives but is itself merely one particular and

---

84 Swanson, p. 2.
85 Swanson, p. 2.
86 Swanson, p. 2.
89 Wilber, *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality*, p. 188.
90 Wilber, *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality*, p. 188.
91 Wilber, *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality*, pp. 15/16.
covertly privileged perspective (and thus ends up, as we have seen, being perfectly self-
contradictory: there is no advantaged perspective except mine, which maintains that all
other perspectives are not so privileged). 92

Although Wilber's overall model includes and relates to many perspectives and
structures of consciousness beyond the mental/rational, his is a rational, hierarchical,
approach. Such an approach, while it is suitable as a method of academic research, is
probably most appropriate to the study of creativity as a hierarchical structure and I am
wary of this. Looking at creativity as it has been hierarchically valued will be an aspect of
this work, but to adopt Wilber's model wholeheartedly would require a stance, like his,
which insists that this new structure of consciousness can only creatively emerge in
those who, having achieved rationality, are self-consciously and individually, able to
transcend the rational structure and embrace centauric planetary vision. 93

*******

I am particularly indebted to Gebser and his vision of Integrality as the creative
experience of origin made manifest in the simultaneous expression of archaic, magical,
mythical and mental/rational consciousness, and to Sands whose work continues to
inspire me. In their work I have found much to support my work with Narrative
Possibility (as later chapters of this research assert). Wilber's work, however,
communicates through an academic and modernist framework and for this reason I
have adopted his quadrants: exterior (behavioral and social) and interior (intentional
and cultural). Through these, I think, I can adequately explore aspects (products,
processes, events and states) of creativity from an academically integral perspective.
Rather than a vertical/horizontal model just like his, however, I am employing my own
integrative methodology, influenced categorically by Wilber's model but as I am
proposing an approach and attitude that recognises creativity as a necessary source and
adjunct of change, a harbinger of change, an event that changes, and an integrating and
evolutionary aspect of consciousness, 94 I have created a form that interweaves and is
informed by a diversity of layers.

92 Wilber, Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, p. 188.
94 Of the many explanations I have encountered in the course of my research I agree with Mickunas:
The term “consciousness” does not mean some inherent characteristic in human physiology,
psychology or other such metaphysical notion or some universal mind developing itself through
nature and history like Hegel; consciousness rather consists of concrete structures given in
various modalities of expression, such as linguists, religions, social, artistic, architectural etc. If it
is unexpressed, we have no basis to claim that it is present in some mysterious fashion. If it is
expressed, then the expression must be taken for granted as a phenomenon and correlated to other
expressions to note the structure to which they belong. p. 1.
While layers are employed in the Narrative Possibility process of painting, in my written texts they are a general attempt to research from many perspectives. Specifically, they are also an attempt at a mode of narration that exemplifies and articulates a possible move towards written integral expression, an expression that includes, but does not synthesise, other perspectives.

My approach, then, necessitates a plurality composed of subjective, intersubjective and objective stories. In text and image it is a composite of de-constructing and assembling, of improvisations, of remembered narratives, academic critiques, ideological recognitions, and the documentation and articulation of the work as it unfolds.

All aspects of this work explore creativity and its expression in text and image through personal and collective inquiry into its occurrence in social, cultural, and individual (exterior and interior), contexts, and not only ask “What does it do?” and “What does it mean?” but “How does it manifest Integrality?”


...at the core of feminist ideas is the crucial insight that there is no one truth, no one authority, no one objective method which leads to the production of pure knowledge. This insight is as applicable to feminist knowledge as it is to patriarchal knowledge, but there is a significant difference between the two: feminist knowledge is based on the premise that the experience of all human beings is valid and must not be excluded from our understandings, whereas patriarchal knowledge is based on the premise that the experience of only half the human population needs to be taken into account and the resulting version can be imposed on the other. p. 7.

Montuori, A Creative Inquiry, suggests ‘a different spirit of inquiry entirely’, a shared experience of creativity:

We would like to encourage a way of going into the phenomenon itself, one which is more open to the different spaces and times, and the different knowledge of creativity. As we conduct such explorations, can we engage in a collective dialogue, a collaborative inquiry that does not involve holding on to oppositions positions and developing oppositional identities, but allows us instead to entertain different positions and explore the very structure of oppositions? Having taken one position, can we then take other positions and see how they shed a different light on the phenomenon? p. 201.

Wilber, The Eye of Spirit, defines this as our mutual understanding including ethics, morals, and justness: ‘our commonly shared background contexts and worldviews’. pp. 16/19.

A primary focus, in this exploration, is creativity, so it is necessary, I think, to evoke a movement towards the unknown, towards chaos. Although using familiar words and images the move must be towards openness, fragility, and change. But, communication depends on the ability to recognise order, and it is this ability which can identify chaos by identifying with an order already manifest, processed, established, and therefore past. Essentially, descriptions of prior contexts, including the state referred to above, are attempts to reconstruct, to recreate an experience through memory, history, and comparison. If a map of preconceived signposts is followed exclusively, however, the territory will either affirm or negate certain perspectives already formulated by past explorations. And, it will explain the differences in conditioned terms: the primary process will be directed by words on sticks or images which, while pointing this way and that, are signs that really stand for other contexts.

Although the documentation of this journey will include other journeys, and others’ explorations: their recordings in images and words, it might be helpful to acknowledge that knowledge acquired from the past, and the passing present, can also become attempts to make the future recognisable, and to some extent predictable. If the focus of exploration is fluidic, however, and therefore independent of definitive product, of label, of stability, it can pause occasionally to remark on the marks, the pattern it is making, and it can utilise the tools of retrospection, relocation and interpretation but carry them as baggage which may need to be jettisoned. Chaos does provide the opportunity for order and action: qualification is manufactured from fragments of data, in models constructed or de-constructed, and through appropriated collages of probabilities and perceptible coincidences, but surely the experience of creativity is alive with potential, the quality of new order, and new meaning. And surely an exploration of creativity must communicate creatively.
ORIGINONE (j)

THE NARRATIVE POSSIBILITY approach to painting:

DAY ONE OF PAINTING: ‘THE TRYST’: A CHAOTIC WASH HAS DRIED AND THE FIRST IMAGES HAVE BEEN BROUGHT TO THE FORE...
Kevin Brophy, writes in his book *Creativity*:

The notion of creativity throws up a number of oppositions which highlight the way its presence shifts under our gaze or slips through our fingers or the way it takes us by surprise despite and because of our maps. Spontaneity or planning, original or copy, art or craft, new or old, uncanny or familiar, play or work, self-expression or chance, Dionysian or Platonic, personal or impersonal, are only some of the oppositions that come into play when we approach a creative task (or approach a task creatively).

I am approaching this task with an attitude to it, and to creativity, that includes the exploration of spontaneity and planning, copying and originality, art and craft, old and new, uncanny and familiar, work and play, self-expression and chance, Dionysian and Platonic ways of knowing, and impersonal and personal stories.

---

**ORIGINTWO (a)**

**ORIGINTWO**: *Ode to the type-writer* is wordy. But words, written words, are the predominant means of communicating the terrain of this exploration and it seems appropriate to give them first focus and to present an overview of present Western approaches to written texts particularly as they relate to the presentation of integrality and to its expression, meaning and interpretation. In their respective works, Jean Gebser, Ken Wilber and Terry Sands are also concerned with present methods of communication, and with finding other ways of manifesting and articulating the inherent qualities of Integral Consciousness. I argue that writing *about* Integral Consciousness cannot exemplify the aspect of simultaneity that Gebser deems essential and that it is necessary to find a way to present the coexistence of the archaic, magical, mythical and mental/rational structures of consciousness to show and tell the essence of integral expression. In *The Expression of Lived-Experience*, Pat Arneson writes:

> The vital-magical dimension of consciousness deals with the transformative ability of words (e.g., the power of rhetoric to sway human actions). In the psychic-mythical dimension all symbolic thought is structured in terms of a cyclical process of polarities which constantly move towards and through each other (e.g., light and dark, male and female). The mental-rational consciousness recognizes that the word is a sum of spatially and temporally arranged objects in a linear, directed orientation (e.g., propositional language).

That the mental-rational structure of consciousness must dominate in my research is an assumption that is questionable, particularly in the context of creative expression, but I recognise its importance in an academic thesis. In Wilber's view, the rational is the only structure that can tolerate structures other than itself and applying this premise, he postulates that it is only ‘from the platform of rational pluralism that the next stage, the truly aperspectival-integral (and universal-integral), can be reached’. Gebser warns, however, that there is also a deficient expression of rationality ‘the wrangling “ratio” in which analysis makes a finer and finer point of logic until the discussion becomes trivial’. But as Feuerstein explains it, it is only an extreme development of the rational consciousness that Gebser cautions against in his remarks on the concepts of *Vernunft* and *Verstand*. ‘Where the English lexicon offers but a single concept, namely “reason” and its synonym “intellect” the German language makes a useful distinction’.

---


Verstand understands; it is masculine, and its understanding is not a hearing but in a certain sense an active grasping (Be-Greifen) and comprehending (Ex-Fassen); it proceeds from its own propositions or from measurable and concrete actualities with which it reckons; it is pre-eminently related to the visible
This distinction represents different aspects of expression: \textit{Verstand} is critique and \textit{Vernunft}, creativity, and it is a balance between these expressions that is imperative to the articulation of Integral Consciousness.

In Gebser’s interpretation, balance is first found in, and experienced through, the interplay of all four structures of consciousness and Gebser has attempted to make his written work an example of the type of thinking one would encounter in the Integral structure of consciousness. As Ed Mahood suggests, Gebser’s book \textit{The Ever-Present Origin} is not ‘reasoned in a linear manner; in fact, the book would probably be better suited to a hypertextual presentation’. Gebser claimed that integral-aperspective consciousness is especially a consciousness in which language ‘is treated as a primordial phenomenon by recognizing its originating-creative nature’, a claim now realised, according to Wilber, in literary theories and ‘the whole “linguistic turn” dating especially to de Saussure’. Wilber, in his four-quadrant model of Integral Consciousness, further interprets this as a new estimation of grammatical aspects and a novel use of syntactical freedom presently manifesting in Linguists, Phenomenology, and Intersubjectivity and the aperspective nature of the postmodern worldview.

In contemporary literary theory Postmodernism recognises the ambiguity, gaps, lies, manipulations and illusions which permeate and create our present Western correspondence. In this chapter, as well as referring to its literary implications and influences I have also looked briefly at Postmodernism and Postmodernity as a philosophical and ideological expression of our Western worldview, and to this end the

\begin{flushright}
and is constricted to the extent that it is not one-sided but is manipulated in consonance with Vernunft; it subsumes itself under the risky, mostly divisive rather than elucidating alternative of “either-or”; the results of its thought processes are either right or wrong. Vernunft takes in (vernehmen) it is feminine as was goddess Arthena, who sprung from the head of Zeus, with her arrow-swift thinking; its taking is receptive, that is (in some sense) passive hearing which reflects upon the echo of the received, just as the ear is not an active but a receptive and, moreover, feminine-accentuated organ… with its tolerant, balanced basic attitude of “as well as” it is able to accord, full of common sense, with the polar varients of that which is “live” (lebendig) thinkable; the results of its particular mode of thought either sound right, or sound nearly right, or, thirdly, just do not sound right. pp. 119/120.

Feuerstein also explains that Gebser has an extraordinary aptitude for hearing out any semantic connections that may exist between similar sounding words or actual homonyms, but, unfortunately, much of his linguistic playfulness falls by the wayside in the process of translation. Footnote in Feuerstein, p. 126.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
6 Mahood Jr, \url{http://www.gajamind.org/Gebser.html}, p. 3. 
8 Wilber, \textit{The Marriage of Sense and Soul}, says: 
There is no way to understand postmodernism without grasping the intrinsic role that interpretation plays in human understanding. Postmodernism, in fact, may be credited with making interpretation central to both epistemology and ontology, to both knowing and being. Interpretation, the postmodernists all maintain in their own ways, is not only crucial for understanding the Kosmos, it is an aspect of its very structure. Interpretation is an intrinsic feature of the fabric of the universe; and there, in a sentence, is the enduring truth at the heart of the great postmodern movements. pp. 116/117.
\end{flushright}
two theorists I have chosen to quote most often in relation to Perspective and Context are Ken Wilber and Peter Vardy. Wilber’s theory that Postmodern expression, in its positive aspects, exemplifies a transitive state of consciousness and is a move towards integral consciousness, is also a significant aspect in my work. Gebser’s brings to attention the limitations of “old” language, and the need for both ‘a stratiform and multiple mode of presentation’ and the loosening up of language. If Postmodern expression includes new linguistic freedom and structure there is a possibility that the wondrous world of words is presently shaking its fetters and that even the term wordsmith is being unforged.

In ORIGINTWO then, I have generally looked at language, and at specific texts. Following Gebser’s lead I have attempted a written exploration that is both creative and analytical. I have approached it as a plural story and a presentation of ‘other ways of knowing’ that (a) points beyond itself and remains open to further involvement, potential, interpretation, experience and change, (b) acknowledges meetings which, as events of significance, continue to inspire. I believe this form of research will inspire new questions and new possibilities not available in a work that begins with an already provable end in view, or one that is justified by past knowledge. I am not suggesting that research should not be progressive and goal orientated, I am, rather, making it clear that these ideals must also allow for the truly new. In Gebser’s words:

…no truly decisive process, that is to say, something besides a tentative and arbitrary occurrence with its provisionalities and recurrences, is a continuum. A true process always occurs in quanta, that is, in leaps; or, expressed in quasi-biological terms, in mutations. It occurs spontaneously, indeterminately, and subsequently, discontinuously. Moreover, we become aware of such presumably invisible processes only when they have reached sufficient strength to manifest themselves on the basis of their cumulative momentum, the apparent continuity is no more than a sequence subsequently superimposed onto overlapping events to lend them the reassuring appearance of a logically determinate progression.

In the course of writing I have made-up words. This is again following the lead of Gebser and Sands who have coined new words to suggest new concepts. I have also avoided wherever possible the use of the word ‘because’. Rejection of this word expresses, according to Gebser, ‘the extrication of the exclusive claim of causal thinking’ and reflects ‘a recognition of acausality and an insight into the ever-present manifold aspectuality of possible relations and interdependencies’. Further, I agree with Gebser’s approach to the word ‘and’ which, if used at the beginning of sentences, expresses emphasis on context. This usage ‘emphasizes interconnections which are not exhausted in enumerative and narrative-sequential thought and its summation of parts’.

---

The section of this chapter concerned with Myth and Ideology (beginning p.65) contains material, presently edited and enlarged, from an essay I originally wrote on this topic for my BA (Images of Human Existence) in 1998. I include it here as an example of contemporary understanding of Archaic, Mythical, Mental, and Rational thought, expression and communication.

ORIGINTWO is also, as all subsequent chapters are, a documentation of the process of writing, an historical documentation of the thinking and making that contributed to the totality of this work. In ORIGINFIVE I continue the exploration of words, written words and the processes, perceptions, contexts and structures that express them. In that chapter, ‘mediums of communication’ and the different functions and states of right/left hemispheres of the brain, briefly included in ORIGINTWO are the focus. According to Leonard Shlain, orality and literacy although not entirely left brain reliant are dominant extensions of human consciousness which require units of information to be communicated one-at-a-time. The left brain functions linearly, and it develops craft, logic, analysis and strategy. The right brain perceives the world concretely, it cognates images and can simultaneously integrate the component parts in the field of vision, synthesizing incongruous elements all-at-once.

---


14 A process which, paradoxically, must fill in the gaps!
ORIGINTWO (b)
State, process, event, and product…

If I can tolerate the ambiguity between doing what is expected and not knowing fully what to do, a fuller knowing…one I can't explain or understand rationally…may come to inform my response.  

It would indeed be consistent with what has actually been discovered thus far to suppose that the “universe in its totality” or “reality as a whole” is unknown, vast, and limitless in extent, depth, and subtlety. After all, the totality includes not only all that has been discovered about nature by all science, but also us, our language, our thoughts, feelings, and intelligent perceptions, and, indeed, all that we can ever come to discover, and probably very much more, beyond our capacity to imagine or conceive.  

Those who first invented and then named the constellations were storytellers. Tracing an imaginary line between a cluster of stars gave them an image and an identity. The stars threaded on that line were like events threaded on a narrative. Imagining the constellations did not of course change the stars, nor did it change the black emptiness that surrounds them. What it changed was the way people read the night sky.

April 1999

Four more opaque plastic satchels of books converge here today. The value of their journey is worth consideration. They’ve already mutually added via message and material (albeit within varying time frames and without absolute significance) to both ‘Guaranteed Next Day’ deliveries and overnight cargoes, approximately fifteen hundred pages of text and a recidivating nightmare. What, if anything, they will contribute to the present context (to knowledge, to articulating a methodological framework, to expressing an ethical stance, to discovering, understanding and communicating the apparently awesome nature of, and the meanings attributed to, creativity) remains to be seen. In form, in content, in dimension, and in duration, they’re a diverse lot. They’re rich in expressive detail and simple surface transaction, both packed and packing. They’re borrowed and bought and thought and made; they hail from different locations, and they have been selected purposefully. And although the opening quote appropriated from Hal Gurish’s essay Transparency does not appear to address the topic of this story specifically, it might transform it.

16 Bohm, On Creativity, p. 72.
Identifying the story/teller

The development of writing, according to Gebser, was first hieroglyph, that is, mythically stressed writing that later became:

…a script or sign or letter, that is mental and abstracting. The meaning, in other words, had to be first expressed most likely by sound and intonation… acoustic characteristics of the magic structure…and only later in pictograph or sign. 18

In Western society, today, writing depends on the structure of words. Individual words, or words threaded in a line to create narrative and describe context, are the literary foundation of communicable exchange, they are the producer and the product. And whether they are intended and/or interpreted to be rhetorical, polarising or positional in meaningful content, written words are predominantly mental constructions. As Eric Havelock (1986) explains:

…it is only as language is written down that it becomes possible to think about it. The acoustic medium, being incapable of visualization, did not achieve recognition as a phenomenon wholly separate from the person who used it. In the alphabetized document the medium became objectified. There it was, reproduced perfectly in the alphabet…no longer just a function of “me” the speaker but a document with an independent existence. 19

Written language follows a linear progression, stringing one idea after the other. In writing (and reading), word follows word to tell a story. And in words themselves, meaning emerges when letters of the alphabet are strung together in line. As Shlain points out, ‘one thing following another forms the basis of linear cause and effect thinking’. 20

Linearity, sequence, abstraction, and analysis are the mental processes presently employed in the production of a written work. Abstract thinking and the advent of an abstract alphabet replaced the ‘complex syllabary of over six hundred cuneiform characters, or six thousand hierographs coupled with rules of grammar that would daunt the most eager student, an alphabet contained a mere twenty-odd letters, and the hegemony of the literary elite was ended’. 21 The invention of the alphabet introduced the possibility of stored knowledge and as it was easy to learn and use, storing and retrieving

18 Gebser, The Ever-Present Origin, p. 156.
20 Shlain, The Alphabet versus the Goddess, p. 337.
of data was also easy. And so began ‘the drama known as western civilization’ a drama that, with the systemization of knowledge, had a star performer... theoretical science.  

Learning the alphabet has been a wonderful boon for culture and society, but as Leonard Shlain points out: once a person learns an alphabet, alphabet mental processes will influence their every assumption and decision for the rest of their lives.

The word spell has a variety of meanings. One refers to the sequence of letters in a word; another is about magic and possession. “To cast a spell” means to interfere with the reality perception of the one entranced. The alphabet's thirty-eight-hundred-year “spell” has prevented those who have used it from recognizing the price it has extracted.

In our present Western education systems, children learn to spell at a very young age, and this process of linearity, sequence, abstraction and analysis depends upon and develops an almost ‘exclusive reliance on the mental structure of consciousness’. The mental-rational structure of consciousness, then, specifically perpetuates and is perpetuated in the literary foundations of communicable exchange.

In a more general sense, communication depends on the culture and society that participates in it. We express ourselves and define our context by showing and telling, by exchanging through specific forms of language whatever is available for commentary in the content of our inner and outer, individual and collective consciousness. But although our perceptions, our interpretations, our locations, our histories, and our states of mind participate in and articulate meaning through systems of communication we must continuously translate our experience into approximations of that experience by the limitations and illusions inherent in language. In other words, our systems of communication create and define us too. Noel Gough explains, ‘human beings are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives’. We think and experience our lives according to hallmarks of communication: by established and validated criteria of logic and reason by which deviation and antithesis are measured; by constructed facts and fictions, and by socially and culturally accepted ambiguities and differences.

Inner and outer stories: emotional, mental, spiritual, physical, cultural and social stories, although processed by individual intuition, aspiration, scrutiny, imagination, speculation, determination, knowledge, understanding, and memory are predetermined by the classifications available within a signifying system. As Gebser says, 'speech or language is not only fundamental to the life of every individual, it is also a compelling and linking factor’. We are united and divided by, and subservient to, structures of

---

25 I am using ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ to mean the distinctions, not the separations, between depths and surfaces.
order and imposed meaning utilised to convey the spectrum of our individual and collective awareness, imagination, experience and experiences. Our individual understanding, then, includes inner and outer apprehensions, but it becomes a story when an inspiration, an occurrence, a feeling or an idea is given significance, identification and substance, and is formed by and expressed in the language of our particular collective worldview.

But our worldview, according to Wilber, likewise creates and dominates our understanding, he says:

Our individual thoughts can only exist against a vast background of cultural practices and languages and contexts, without which we could form virtually no individual thoughts at all. But culture itself, he explains, is not simply disembodied, hanging in idealistic mid-air. It has material components, much as my own individual thoughts have material brain components. All cultural events have social correlates. These concrete social components include types of technology, forces of production (horticulture, agrarian, industrial, etc.), concrete institutions, written codes and patterns, geopolitical locations, and so on (the Lower Right quadrant). And these concrete material components…the actual social system…are crucial in helping to determine the types of cultural worldview, within which my own thought will arise.28

However, although stories adhere in a vast network of shared reality they depend on the agreed meanings attributed to sounds and words which are, in themselves, meaningless. Meaninglessness is not just an absence or a lack of experience or understanding, it is also the absence of the ability, which includes the means and the way, to connect through expression, to tell an original story.

The lack of a common form of expression or language, ideological or mythical, means that the original, different, or changed, may be suppressed, altered, ignored, misunderstood, usurped, abstracted or regarded as a simple nonsense. Language must connect in common understanding or there can be no identification of meaning. Whatever the original, or the imposed story, our text (our words and our images, and our ability to implement them) have, by the honing of dexterity, by labeling,29 by learning of labels and subsequent relabeling, and by collages and symbols of attributed meaning evolved from mere methods of communicated information to accepted forms of art, ratified forms of seeing, feeling, knowing and telling.

28 Wilber, The Eye of Spirit, p. 103. (his italics)
29 Gough, suggests that:

Names are not inherent in nature. They are impositions of human minds. Naming an object or an event is not just a matter of labeling distinctions that ‘really’ exist. A name constructs the illusions that what has been named is genuinely distinguishable from all else. In creating these distinctions we can easily lose sight of the seamlessness of that which is signified by words and abstractions. p. 10.
With graphically articulated perspectives of context, accumulated (described and compared) experiences, a discovered capacity of recapitulated memory, and the wonder of imagination and insight, we have woven the stories that document our future dreams, our continuing history. These have become the repositories of our collective, individual, cultural and societal knowledge and, in most general of terms, creative expressions. Our stories and the way we show and tell them: our mental/rational, mythical, factual and fictional, stories have become theoretically questionable in our present worldview which, although apparently accepting its temporality, relies on these same structures of communication. But if a story is very different, its integration demands a quest for an expression of the inexpressible, and a form that finds identification either within an individual or between individuals. As Maurice Merleau-Ponty, suggests, ‘the acquisition of language is itself a phenomenon of identification. To learn to speak is to learn to play a series of roles, to assume a series of conducts or linguistic gestures’.  

Language gives us a locus of identification, but it cannot give countenance to the truly new: language is always a story already, and only, partly told. New ideas, new words, new forms must find relevance through old stories. Stories, then, are (continuously) made-up from recycled, rearranged and internalised systems of communication that are outwardly manifested via the conscious and unconscious appropriation of signs necessary to maintain common sense understanding and exchange in identifiable contexts. Ironically, the “flaw” or blinker in postmodern thought, according to Ellen Dissanayake, is what made it, and Western philosophy and modernism themselves, possible: a reliance on reading and writing.

---

30 I have used this word to illustrate the perceived ambiguity of certain words. In the World Book Dictionary, Doubleday, Chicago, 1985, the meanings of Graphic include: ‘producing by words the effect of a picture; lifelike; vivid. The letters of the alphabet are graphic symbols. Written inscribed. It is in Graphic Art that the word means drawing, painting etching or expression by means of lines’. p. 928.


32 Although Belsey, points out: The difficulty of challenging common sense becomes apparent in the context of the close relationship between language and thinking. Language is not, of course, the only signifying system. Images, gestures, social behaviors, clothes are all socially invested with meaning, are all elements of the symbolic order: language is simply the most flexible and perhaps the most complex of the signifying systems. Thought, if not exclusively dependent on language, is inconceivable without the symbolic order in general. p. 45.

And Wilber, Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, explains: …the word dog has a shared meaning to you and me because that sign exists in a shared linguistic structure and a shared cultural background of social and interpretative practices. But what if you had never seen a real dog? What then?

I could of course describe one to you, but the word will be meaningless unless there are some points of shared experience that will allow you to “call up” in your mind the same signified that I mean with the signifier “dog.” The hermeneuticists are quite right in that regard: the same linguistic structures that you and I share are not enough, in themselves, to give you the proper signified. You and I have to share a common lived experience in order to assume identical signification. p. 270.

ORIGINTWO (d)
Visual metaphors, impermanence, and a Papuan event: spacetime first, sentence later…34

Without writing, words as such have no visual presence, even when the objects they represent are visual. They are sounds. You might 'call' them back…‘recall’ them. But there is nowhere to ‘look’ for them. They have no focus and no trace (a visual metaphor, showing dependency on writing), is not even a trajectory. They are occurrences, events. 35

The menu, not the meal…

They inch up Paw Paw tree t'ward leaves to wrap,
(to cover, to bundle and to lay
in smells of sweat and stuffed-in steam,
in dark shallow pits, under smoky hot rocks),
and scour other plants for leaves to bind.

In their donga a Cuscus is kept alive, temporally. It will never graduate, like the pig, from titty to three-footloose-tethering, but then its time span spectrum, and its purpose is different. A Cuscus is not a dowry…

“Mind me,” thinks Alice, “if I were Little Red Riding Hood I’d not be fooled by disguise, and wouldn’t have a conversation with an invisible cat.” She does know, of course, that this animal is not a cat, but because it looks a bit like one, she doesn't suspect a monster.

“Whatever it is,” she reasons, “it's awfully quiet, it's really here now, and it's alive.”
It's a Cuscus, Alice, it's a marsupial, and this one's a mother! Look now, her thick creamy fur covers all but those eyes (are they speaking? is she talking to you?), and part of her tail.

But she's tied, Alice, she's bonded: that long tail's scaly curl has been straightened, and strapped around with strips of tough torn leaf, and bound to a pole, or, (if the word ‘staff’ more exactly describes a sturdy,
hand held, tall as a man tree branch and means, figuratively, ‘something or someone that supports or sustains’)\textsuperscript{36} bound to a staff. See, it’s as if her body rests on this staff for added support, and for panicky parental protection of her pouch. To this sentiment, however, she’s really had no choice: she’s been turned; she's now unnaturally upright, and her limbs too have been stretched and secured.

Now imagine, Alice, that they're holding the staff, that they're lowering it for you to closely see, and you, nearly face to face lean forward to kiss to kiss to kiss and… picture this for an impression… the animal's teeth have snapped right through your top lip and they seem to be locked there.

“LOCKED!”
“DON'T LET THEM TRY TO MOVE THE STAVE!”

unleashed, this memory rejoins
a reddy procession
of silence that falls
in force forming patter:
tap, pity, tap, pity, tap-pity-tap

This piece of creative writing deals with the loss of innocence, and it was interesting for me to read Shlain after it was completed, and I think it is apt to include his words particularly as they relate to the educational process and creativity.

In the Greek myth of the origin of the alphabet's letters, the Phoenican prince Cadmus, later to become king of Thebes, slew a fearsome serpent and sowed the monster's sharp deadly teeth. An aggressive army of warriors sprang from where the teeth were planted. The military image is apt as a representation: a uniform row of teeth closely resembles the strict repeatability of soldiers on parade, and it also resembles a line consisting of letters of the alphabet.
The linear alphabet and its equally linear comrades-in-arms, the numerals, are loosed like soldiers to destroy the child's belief in discontinuous space and mythical time. After their victory, the alphabet and numbers impose a new order in line with the essential premises of Euclid's and Aristotle's teachings. This process occurs in the West at such a defenseless age that the child is never aware of what is happening until, of course, it's too late. Once begun, “education” continues inexorably in the higher grades with the formal teachings of geometry and logic. As language, math, and logic take hold, they drive magic out of the child's being, and by early adolescence, rationality stands triumphant over the pale

\textsuperscript{36} The World Book Dictionary, Doubleday, USA, 1985, p. 2034
atrophied survivors of the once-powerful juvenile convictions about magic, mystery, and myth. 37

ORIGINTWO (e)
Making Meanings

Poststructuralism and postmodernism are openly and unreservedly preoccupied with reading and writing. 38

One of the features of alphabetic literacy is its “transparency,” the way it seems to give, without laborious deciphering, instant and direct access to its subject, rather as a picture composed with one-point perspective appears to offer a window onto the real world. Once mastered, alphabetic script “dissolves” and reading seems natural, although the skills that produce the material being read are not natural at all. 39

Writing is indeed the seedbed of irony, and the longer the writing (and print) tradition endures, the heavier the ironic growth becomes. 40

While denying the possibility of ultimate truth, the present postmodern, and predominantly western, worldview although ironic does not deny that all stories reveal distortions, reductions and gaps which can be traced within the signifying systems and identified, ultimately, as lies. At the same time it is suspicious of any foundational identification, any philosophical or metaphysical firsts or seconds. Human reason, according to postmodern theory, ‘is an inadequate instrument for achieving truth’. 41 And furthermore, ‘language is radically contradictory, so contradictory that it is impossible to use language to refer to anything in particular’ 42 there is no essence, no crux of meaning. 43

37 Shlain, Art and Physics, p. 141.
38 Dissanayake, p. 208.
39 Dissanayake, p. 204.
40 Ong, p. 103.
42 The deconstructionists, according to Seaton, argue that ‘no matter how hard we try, we cannot refer to anything outside language itself’. p. 2.
43 T Eagleton, Literary Theory, Blackwell, Oxford, UK, 1996, The fact that a sign can be reproduced is therefore part of its identity; but it is also what divides its identity, because it can also be reproduced in a different context which changes its meaning. It is difficult to know what a sign ‘originally’ means, what its ‘original’ context was: we simply encounter it in many different situations, and although it must maintain a certain consistency across these situations in order to be an identifiable sign at all, because it’s context is always different it is never absolutely the
Meaning then, as any postmodernist knows, is determined by context, and contexts change, or shift. And this perpetual shifting of meaning has radical implications: not only is no reading of a [conventional] text final, but no particular reading can have more meaning or relevance than any other. This is so for two reasons. First, any reader is operating from a relative, unstable set of meanings, as this is the nature of the meaning-system [language] itself. Second, the author herself is operating within the constraints of the very same system. There is, therefore, no original meaning for the reader to apprehend, even if he could. Nor can there be. 44

According to postmodern literary theory, a story is not a simple exchange of meaning: meaning is ambiguous and open to interpretation and challenge. It used to be, according to Wilber, ‘that “meaning” was something the author created and simply put into a text, and the reader simply pulled it out’. 45 Now, the meaning of a story is many faceted, but the meanings put in and pulled out are dependent on perspective, and therefore more or less include, misconstrue, deny or suppress other perspectives. Meaning may be consciously and unconsciously generated by an author and interpreted by different readers’ reception and response (naïve, sophisticated and critical) and made valid by analysis and consensus. While the story itself may be defined, or deconstructed by the sub text and the meaning of its own inner structure, its determinants: its configuration, function, and convention, as well as by its gaps, its …spots of indeterminacy. 46 But meaning is context-dependent, according to Wilber. And this, he says, is one of the three truths of Postmodernism. 47

Not only is meaning in many important ways dependent upon the context in which it finds itself, these contexts are in principal endless and boundless. Thus there is no way finally to master and control meaning once and for all (because I can always manage to imagine a further context that would alter the present meaning). Johnathan Culler has, in fact, summarized all of deconstruction (one of the most influential of the postmodern movements) in this way: “One could therefore identify deconstruction with the twin

---

45 Wilber, Eye of Spirit, pp. .96-98
46 Wilber, Eye of Spirit, ‘The phenomenologists (e.g., Iser, Ingarden) tried a combination of two,’ according to Wilber, ‘the texts has gaps (“spots of indeterminacy”), and the meaning of the gaps can be found in the reader.’ p. 98.
47 Wilber, Integral Psychology, Shambhala, London, 2000. Incoherent as the postmodern theories often sound (and often are) nonetheless most postmodern approaches share three important core assumptions:
1. Reality is not in all ways pregiven, but in some significant ways is a construction, an interpretation (this view is often called constructivism); the belief that reality is simply given, and not also partly constructed, is referred to as “the myth of the given.” 2. Meaning is context-dependent, and contexts are boundless (this is often called contextualism). 3. Cognition must therefore unduly privilege no single perspective (this is called integral-aperspectivism). pp. 162/163. (his italics)
principles of the contextual determination of meaning and the infinite extendibility of context. 48

The context of Postmodernism offers no privileged perspective, but meaning is manifold, and is constructed in and by social, cultural, historical, ideological, mythical and temporally real contexts that may be understood and communicated objectively and intersubjectively, monologically and dialogically, 49 by interpretations 50 and descriptions of external and internal experiences and circumstances.


49 I am not specifically referring to Bohm’s idea of Dialogue in this context. I do intend to look at his proposal in detail but the following adds to general understanding of the term.


Dialogue is the attempt to attain a true understanding about a subject matter. The concern of understanding with a subject matter and the experience of the meaningfulness of the interpretation in this regard is the sign of the moment of *applicatio* in understanding. The very intention of claiming that understanding is at the same time interpretation is precisely to avoid relativism. This intention can now be made clearer in the light of the analyses of *phronesis* and dialogue. **Applicatio**, and *phronesis* (practical wisdom). pp. 58/59.

According to Hoy, his understanding of Gadamer, and Gadamer’s understanding of Aristotle, is the ability to perceive:

what is at stake in a given situation. Unlike techne, the craftsman’s art, which possesses a teachable knowledge, practical wisdom cannot be taught. Nor is practical knowledge purely a reasoned state, for a state of that sort may be forgotten but practical wisdom cannot. p. 58.

50 Wilber, *The Marriage of sense and Soul*, says:

There is no way to understand postmodernism without grasping the intrinsic role that interpretation plays in human understanding. Postmodernism, in fact, may be credited with making interpretation central to both epistemology and ontology, to both knowing and being. Interpretation, the postmodernists all maintain in their own ways, is not only crucial for understanding the Kosmos, it is an aspect of its very structure. Interpretation is an intrinsic feature of the fabric of the universe; and there, in a sentence, is the enduring truth at the heart of the great postmodern movements. p. 117/118.

PADDY PLASTO/ORIGIN TWO
ORIGINTWO (f)

POSTMODERISM: the tenuous tenure of (word) rules

To limit our worldviews by regarding them as absolute truth or as stages of a steady approach to such a truth evidently interferes with their proper function, for this tends to prevent the consideration of fundamentally different notions that may be needed to fit new observations and experience. Our worldviews have thus to be able to alter radically if this is called for by what we learn and what we observe. To attempt to regard these views as permanently fixed is like putting a solid rock in a flowing stream; the result is turbulence and chaos.  

What is significant about worldviews, according to Bohm, is not merely their content but their proper function, which is to help organise our ever-changing knowledge and experience in a coherent way. Postmodernism and the philosophy of postmodernity as it is represented in text and image, is a story that characterises the present enigmas of social and cultural exchange. The contemporary western worldview, and ‘the works and ideas that are called postmodernist can be lamented or ignored, but like modernism’s words and ideas, they certainly reflect the society that gave birth to them’. Postmodernism, according to Peter Vardy, ‘is about telling stories rather than The Story, refusing to allow the individual to be subsumed within a general overarching story’ or made manifest by mythical representation. Although this view implies creative freedom for the individual, this freedom is partial if ‘any move to construct a new story has to be resisted and undermined’. In postmodern interpretation then, there is no completed story, no final truth, there is only liberated text ‘all we can write is stories that lead to...

---

51 Bohm, On Dialogue, p. 72.
52 Bohm, On Dialogue, p. 72.
53 It is necessary, I think, to distinguish, as Eagleton has, ‘the more comprehensive, historical or philosophical term ‘postmodernity’ from the narrow, more cultural or aesthetic term ‘postmodernism’.’ Postmodernity means the end of modernity, in the sense of those grand narratives of truth, reason, science, progress and universal emancipation which are taken to characterise modern thought from the Enlightenment onwards. For postmodernity, those fond hopes have not only been historically discredited; they were dangerous illusions from the outset, bundling the rich contingencies of history into a conceptual straitjacket. These terms ‘involve the dangerously absolutist faith that our varied, contingent forms of life and knowledge can be grounded in some single, ultimate, unimpeachable principal: Reason or the laws of history, technology or modes of production, political utopia or a universal human nature’. pp. 200/201.
54 Dissanayaka, p. 200.
55 P Vardy, What’s the Truth, UNSW, Australia, 1999, p. 106.
56 Vardy, p. 106.
more stories as truth is always perspectival and dependent on the interpretive structures through which it is viewed'.

Somewhat ironically, however, postmodern stories can denominate, where it is appropriate and helpful to understanding, theories that state the functions of meaning-making and the production, and deconstruction, of its text. And, paradoxically, although there 'are strong echoes of anarchism within some strands of postmodernism which reject any authority and any imposition of a system or rules, all the different perspectives through which postmodernism is viewed agree that there are no absolutes, no rocks of certainty on which one can stand firm'.

Postmodernism is difficult to characterise but, broadly speaking there are two possible versions, both of which reject metanarratives. One view holds that human beings are afloat on a constantly changing sea where perspective is all. Culture, gender, sexuality, social station and other factors determine what is real, and truth is finally abandoned. According to the other view, texts and claims to truth must always be viewed with suspicion, but there is a strong commitment to 'justice' and 'the other'. Postmodern culture leads to a denial of any absolutes and truth becoming a word of opposition. Every perspective is equally valid.

But while the postmodern story admits that stories are full of holes, that no story can weave or waft a fabric without flaws, it promotes its own perspectival perspective, one in which 'the very attempt to persuade another of one's own perspective is an exercise in power'. In doing this it exemplifies the contradictions inherent in a world (a society or an individual) composed of fragments, of absences, of differences, and 'other' temporary identities: it is a story about the postmodern process, which employs the postmodern process, and knows it. However, while exposing the limits and the power of ideological perspective, and posing the possibility of open, ever expanding vision, postmodernism unmasks the metanarrative, or quest, as a myth of progress. The society that gave birth to the process has created for itself what appears to be a continuously renewable and gratuitous function. As Vardy points out 'for someone to claim that there is a 'postmodern view of the world' almost amounts to a contradiction'. In fact the postmodern view of the world seeks to expose rather than expound script and disclaim rather than

---

57 Vardy, p. 106.
58 Vardy, pp. 98-100.
59 Vardy, p. 119.
60 Vardy, p. 98.
61 Although as Vardy suggests, the postmodern individual lives in a world in which ‘human beings are seen as finite and insignificant’. p.101, I wonder if Postmodernism is a paradoxical metaphor for an innovative consumer society, for a dominant ideology in control of resources, and for a people desperately denying perfection, and desperately afraid of, and therefore also denying an end, or a death?
63 R. Blau DuPlessis, Writing beyond the Ending, Indiana Uni. Press, Bloomington, 1985, explains the nature of social exchange:

Any social convention is like a “script,” which suggests sequences of action and response, the meaning we give these, and the ways of organizing experience by choices, emphases, priorities. The term offers to social analysis what “ideology” offers to cultural analysis: “a generic term for the processes by

PADDY PLASTO/ORIGIN TWO
recognise perspective. The difference between the philosophies of modernity and postmodernity, then, is not that perspective is abandoned but:

…whereas the modern mind’s conviction of superiority derived from its awareness of possessing in an absolute sense more knowledge than its predecessors, the post-modern mind’s sense of superiority derives from its special awareness of how little knowledge can be claimed by any mind, itself included.  

While rejecting any attempt to find a universal human nature, only the nature of postmodernism is considered eclectic in its recognition that all worldviews are partial. Knowing this, of course, does not guarantee the ability and agility to live ‘on the sea of uncertainty with no fixed marks and where nothing abides or endures’.  

If a story knows its own function to be groundless and gratuitous, if it is a story that ‘can attain a kind of negative authenticity only by flaunting its ironic awareness of this fact, wryly pointing its own status as a constructed artifice’, how does an individual, a society or a culture share coherent meaning, or find a form to fit ever-changing knowledge and experience?

Communicable exchange functions through, and is a product of, meanings constructed in common sense, which is a shared ability or attitude, however controversial and ideologically bound, towards the sense and the nonsense accepted, rejected, and constituted in thought and action, as reality. This seems to be a universal aspect of human nature! Perspectives and contexts, however, provide the interpretive structures through which a worldview, theory, or paradigm, is viewed.

---

which meaning is produced, challenged, reproduced, transformed.” Indeed, sociologists and other students of social practice use terms like “scripts” to explain the existence of strongly mandated patterns of learned behaviors that are culturally and historically specific, and that offer a rational for unselfconscious acts. Scripts are also integrated; a whole “social script” is an interlocking group of cognitive structures. p. 2

64 Vardy, p. 104.
65 Vardy, p. 101.
66 Eagleton, p. 201.
67 Eagleton, p. 201.
ORIGIN TWO (g)

Ode to the type-writer and all postmodern utterances

“Can you say that?”
“I just did.”

But of all other stupendous inventions, what sublimity of mind must have been his who conceived how to communicate his most secret thoughts to any other person, though very far distant either in time or place? And with no greater difficulty than the various arrangements of two dozen little signs upon paper? Let this be the seal of all the admirable inventions of man. Galileo

Even a positive thing casts a shadow... its unique excellence is at the same time its tragic flaw. William Irwin Thompson

Alice, still sitting under a tree by the river, moves, simultaneously, to tap-dance and to daydream. The sun she imagines, is not a member of the audience or a participant-observer (although these, she understands, are significant and sustaining functions) because, at least in-this-in-stance, she surmises, the sun is the cause. In her view, these glorious cutouts are leaf-missing pieces of light which, when shuffled, still reveal the number first thought of. And these chaotic patterns of lacy shadow are both natural filaments and starry projections. Tap, tap. They are dynamic, she tells herself, they are not some story of fictitiously informal performances, factual non-events and, for want of better words, precalculated happenstances which, when concentrated, become a matter resembling some wondrously spontaneous begetting-together. This narration, she goes on, is itself merely a linguistic liturgy, a theoretical prognostication, tappity tap, a remarking and remaking of metaphor, of myth and meme, in metaphorical time!

“And yet it’s with words,” she says aloud, “and through stories, that we can construct a meaning and a cause: these spaces are ever changing patterns, (ever changing, patterns, ever, changing patterns,) and they are formed, are they not, by breeze, by

---


And from a literary perspective, Eagleton, says of the traditional view: ‘it was the function of signs to reflect inward experiences or objects in the real world, to “make present” one’s thoughts and feelings or to describe how reality was’. But in postmodern theory, ‘nothing is ever fully present in signs: it is an illusion for me to believe that I can ever be fully present to you in what I say or write, because to use signs at all entails that my meaning is always somehow dispersed, divided and never quite at one with itself’. p. 112.
season, by seed-pool competition, and by present condition and circumferdence…?”
Tapity-Tap… “Hmmm,” say the other voices, as if out of nowhere but certain of
their perspective, “this nonsense must be a type of phenomist prelude.”

**ORIGINTWO (h)**

In social and cultural contexts the paradigms invented to name, justify, order, challenge,
control, and change have orchestrated and authorized what seems natural, obvious, and
the way things are. These paradigms demonstrate and reproduce assumptions, conflicts,
patterns and fictional limits for experience. But paradigms also, as collective stories,
appear to mirror culture and society and claim that they ‘on the contrary, are not given
but produced in a specific society by the ways in which that society talks and thinks
about itself and its experience’. 70 Ideology and myth must surely be terms that,
together, embody and broadcast narrative domination. Myth and Ideology tell a story
that may reinforce and strengthen, or silence, other voices and other paradigms, and
limit and repress peripherals. Written stories are dominated by existing cultural and
social paradigms, by formulated expression manifested through the employment of the
prevailing sciences of sign and the accepted processes and products of communication.

The following essay, a journey into the meeting and overlapping of myth and ideology
was written early in 1998. At that time I had not met with Gebser’s work although I was
familiar with both Sands and Wilber’s writing and ideas. Don’t drink drive it’s a laundry
detergent was intended to convey the interconnection of myth and ideology.

**Don’t drink drive it’s a laundry detergent: myth and ideology**

Raymond Williams explains that ‘it can of course be argued that individual words should
never be isolated, since they depend for their meanings on their actual contexts’. 72 The
contexts of myth and ideology are located in, and are identifiable with, concepts of

---

70 Belsey, p. 3.
71 According to R Lipsey, *An Art of Our Own*, Shambhala, USA, 1988, the difference between an idea and an
ideology is that:

Ideas open. Individual men and woman conceive and exchange them, visibly bear them and stand ready,
within limits, to alter or replace them. Ideologies close. They establish a perimeter within which
certain ideas are acceptable, outside of which others are not. Within the perimeter, numerous ideas are
tightly fastened to each other in such a way that they lose their inherent mobility. An ideology is never
one idea, it is many, held with catechistic force in an approved pattern. Ideologies never apply to one
person only; they always count in larger numbers. They subordinate individuals and encourage a heated
allegiance that leaves little opportunity for the sometimes clumsy, sometimes delightful exercise through
which ideas are refined and adapted to circumstance. pp. 129/130.
72 Williams, p. 22.
'History, Culture, Nature and Literature' and all of these and their relationships cannot be ignored in this inquiry. With the exception of history which, says Williams, continues to 'teach or show us most kinds of knowable past and almost every kind of imaginable future', the general meanings of these words, and their relations between past and present have shifted and changed, sometimes radically. So that, as Williams points out:

...the problem of meaning can never be wholly dissolved into context. It is true that no word can stand on its own, since it is always an element in the social process of language, and its uses depend on complex and (though variable) systematic properties of language itself.

However if, as Eagleton suggests, words 'work only by a process of difference', then it is essential to ask, 'where in language, do you draw the line?'

In *Keywords*, Williams finds that our culture and society share several general senses of myth and ideology, and says:

I have called these words Keywords in two connected senses: they are significant, binding words in certain activities and their interpretation; they are significant, indicative words in certain forms of thought. Certain uses bound together certain ways of seeing culture and society, not least in these two most general words. Certain other uses seemed to me to open up issues and problems, in the same general area, of which we all needed to be very much more conscious.

We understand ideology 'as the set of ideas which arise from a given set of material interests or, more broadly, from a definite class or group' and, 'in popular argument, in the sense initiated by Napoleon, as a term of abuse which presently points at: false consciousness, illusion, or an upsidedown version of reality'. Myth, says Williams, is complex, it 'is now both a very significant and a very difficult word' and it has 'a fabulous range of meanings'. These include the idea that 'myths are a truer (deeper) version of reality than (secular) history or realistic description or scientific explanation' and, as well, that 'myths were related to a disease of language in which a confusion of names led to personifications; to an animistic stage of human culture; and to specific rituals, which the myths gave access to'.

---

73 It is interesting that the different views which make-up the meanings of these words are identifiable in history and culture and share parallels and oppositions 'in line' with myth and ideology, as Williams's references show.
74 Williams, p. 148.
75 Williams, p. 22.
76 Eagleton, p. 113.
77 Eagleton, p. 111.
78 Williams, p. 15.
79 Williams, pp. 155-157.
80 Williams, p. 211.
Myth also has, ‘outside this range of ideas, the flat common sense of a false (often deliberately false) belief or account’. 81 But as the emphasis in Williams’s analysis is deliberately social and historical, he claims that ‘most of the social and intellectual issues, including both gradual developments and most explicit controversies and conflicts, persist within and beyond the linguistic analysis’. 82

Moving from general issues of meaning development to the specific use of words in language, however, different issues arise. History, for example, as well as providing a surface insight into conceptual and contextual changes over time, takes on very different and controversial meanings in both myth and ideology in its relations to, and within, the linguistic forms of specific cultures and societies. Catherine Belsey agrees and says:

We are compelled to argue either that our language has got its concepts ‘right’ in some absolute way, and that all the others are to varying degrees out of step, or that concepts are purely differential, and that they are determined not by their positive content but by their relations with other terms of the system. 83

But language is a social fact in Saussure’s view. And in seeing language is a system of signs, he posits the theory that language ‘is to be studied ‘synchronically’ that is to say, studied as a complete system at a given point in time...rather than ‘diachronically’, in its historical development’. 84 In Saussure’s terms, ‘signs function not through their intrinsic value, but through their relative position’. 85 Shifts in the meaning of words, then, although becoming socially and, therefore, historically familiar, differ in general and specific use not because of their individual complexities and complications, not because of their positive content but because of their differences. Meanings of words, he maintains, depend on their relationships within the signifying system which constitutes them as vehicles of communication. Language itself is both the producer and conveyor of ambiguous and, being socially familiar, apparently meaningful content. Words are both sign and concept signifier and signified, and as tools in the process of constructed meaning, have no connection in reality to the things, or the non-things, they refer to:

…signifiers are used to mark off areas of a continuum: ‘the world, which without signification would be experienced as a continuum, is divided up by language into entities which then readily come to be experienced as essentially distinct. 86

At this point it is useful, I think, to look at myth in more detail, as if essentially distinct, and to hold Saussure’s theory in mind for the moment. Historically, at least, the word mythology came first, (in relation to the word ideology,) and it seems appropriate to look at different modes of myth’s study: the archaic, modern, and postmodern interpretations, and to relate the findings to ideology. It is already evident, as Williams shows, that in our

81 Williams, p.211.
82 Williams, p.211.
83 Belsey, p. 40.
84 Eagleton, p. 84.
86 Belsey, p. 40.
society myth and ideology share a similar duality in their present general meanings and applications: the possibility of reconciling illusion with reality, identifying preexisting forms or inner grammatical rules, of accepting each meaning according to context and content are still open to question, and so is the premise that a myth, and a belief in or view of myth, is articulated in and by the prevailing ideological construction of its time and context.

Myth

A myth, as expounded by Mircea Eliade in what is termed the archaic and traditional sense, is a story retold in symbol and metaphor:

A myth defines itself by its own mode of being. It can only be grasped, as a myth, in so far as it reveals something as having been fully manifested, and this manifestation is at the same time creative and exemplary, since it is the foundation of a structure of reality as well as a kind of human behavior.  

In this understanding a myth’s content contains repeatable material truths, cloaked in unoriginal (because what appears to be creative has already been created) manifestations which reveal a universal reality beyond the mundane. Eliade, an historian of religion and advocate of a new humanism, considers that we are at last:

...beginning to know and understand the value of the myth, as it had been elaborated in “primitive” and archaic societies...that is among those groups of mankind where the myth happens to be the very foundation of social life.

In the past, and in the remaining traditional cultures, myths (or ‘mythologies prior to C15’ according to Williams) have been read and told as stories of origins in which ‘...the essential human condition precedes the actual human condition’, the way things were, the way things are, and the way things will continue to be, but history is accepted in a different sense. In archaic societies, says Eliade: ‘a myth is a true history of what came to pass at the beginning of Time’.

...in such societies the myth is thought to express the absolute truth, because it narrates a sacred history; that is, a transhuman revelation which took place at the dawning of the Great time, in the holy time of the beginnings (in illo tempore). And this provision of an

---

88 Eliade, p. 23.
89 Williams, p. 211.
90 Eliade, p. 23.
91 Eliade, p. 23.
opening into the Great Time, a periodic re-entry into Time primordial is one of myth’s essential functions.  

In the provision of this essential function, a myth is elevated above mere history, a saga of origins and regeneration, to its spiritual equivalent because individual members of a society attribute to myth, which, of course, ‘cannot be particular, private or personal’ not only an exemplary value that it is real, sacred and repeatable, but accept it as a kind of blessing, a sacrament:

…in imitating the acts of a god or a mythic hero, or simply in recounting their adventures, the man of the archaic society detaches himself from profane time and magically re-enters the Great Time, the sacred time, and therefore, eternal time.

When accepted to be an act that is a re-action of heroic creation, myth it is not an interpretation of reality, it is an experience of reality as if it has happened before:

The Polynesians, when setting out upon a grandiose maritime adventure, are careful to deny its “novelty” its unprecedentedness, its spontaneity; for them it is only a case of repeating the voyage that was made by some mythical hero in illo tempore, to “show men the way”, to set an example.

In individual detachment archaic myth becomes a shared view of a postulated world’s already lived reality. By this detachment, however, myth supports not only a ‘neglect of the present time’, but the impossibility of progress. Myths, then, serve a conservative purpose, while it is claimed that myth generates an individual experience of Great Time, myths impose a profane view, a regressive history which suppresses historic time, and which functions to deter or undermine the original sin of mental curiosity. Questions should never reach the tip of the tongue, (and therefore never voice the suspicion of illusion). Myths are the ground and the goal, because myth gives everything, everywhere, everytime. As Eliade points out:

…the very fact of saying what happened reveals how the thing in question was realised (and this how stands for why). For the act of coming to be is, at the same time, the emergence of a reality and the disclosure of its fundamental structure.

Myths are not only ‘in the beginning was the word’ stories, they are stories of how that word works, and re-works. But in addition, there is, according to Eliade:

…a special emphasis, which is important: the myth is assumed by man in as much as he is a whole being; it is not addressed to his intelligence or his imagination only. When no
longer assumed to be a revelation of the “mysteries” the myth becomes “decadent”, obscured; it turns into a tale or legend.  

When legends, myths become mere illusions, or at best a structure based on fictional, oppositional relationships, and idealistic, and, in the general and looser sense of the word, dialectic resolution. Yet to some degree, even in archaic societies, myths change, for they are not hand-me-across stories: they are a particular culture’s interpretation of nature, human nature and supernature.

Whatever the real function of myths, they serve an obvious function: a unifying model for an intensely cohesive social order, as Wilber explains ‘they are egocentric, geocentric, and anthropocentric notions of reality’. But precisely because they are socially and culturally binding they are exclusive and divisive forerunners of their beholden offspring, religion, and they too can be explored synchronically and diachronically.

Modern world myths

If one were asked to provide a single explanation for the growth of English studies in the later nineteenth century, one could do worse than reply: ‘the failure of religion,’

Until the seventeenth century, at least according to the general understanding of life and death, life did not evolve: new patterns of organisation were not in the societal make-up. But, by the nineteenth century evolution as a concept was understood as part of social change, and this change was a big one for myths and for the books that gave them common credence. As a word, myth had its origin in English, but it also took on several meanings other than those that retrospectively referred to mythology or mythos. In modern terms myths were untrustworthy or even deliberately deceptive, related to a disease of language: clairvoyance, and an active form of social organisation.

---

98 Eliade, p. 16.
99 Wilber, Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, p. 234.
100 In Eliade’s words:
By the “modern world”, we mean contemporary Western society; but also a certain state of mind which has been formed by successive deposits ever since the Renaissance and the Reformaion. The active classes of the urban societies are in this sense “modern”...that is, the mass of mankind which has been more or less directly shaped by education and official culture. The rest of the population, especially in central and south-eastern Europe, still maintains its attachment to a traditional and half-Christian spiritual universe. The agricultural societies are, as a rule, passive towards history; most of the time they merely undergo it, and when directly involved in the great historical turmoils (for instance, the barbarian invasions of late antiquity), their reaction is that of passive resistance. p. 25.
101 Eagleton, p. 20.
102 Williams, explains that the word evolve, coined in English in the mid seventeenth century was originally used in the sense “of unrolling a book” and applied to “the unrolling of something that already exists” but by Darwin’s era it had became a word that referred to “a process of natural historical development. pp. 120/121.
103 Eagleton, devotes a chapter in Literary Theory to the Rise of English, and explains how and why literature was ideologically suitable as a modern social bind. pp. 15-46.
104 Williams, p. 211.
And in the rationale of modern western culture, whose religious myth was already very different from the archaic, myth included the survival of the fittest, so that instead of being a story of origins, myth was an origin of species. Growth, however, was a thing to be reckoned and produced. Because while modern myth didn't offer everything, everywhere, everytime, in place of its already formed Judae-Christian idea of historical progress towards an end that in some sense recreates the primal paradise before the Fall, the idea of evolution now held natural purpose, progress and change all in good time, and all at a secular price. But this concept of time generates a paradox! In societies measured by production and acquisition, time moves in a linear direction, not in the cyclical show of nature, so that the present is a dividing line between the past and the future and has no intrinsic value. And because it was thought to be an irreversible phenomenon and a natural process available for manipulation it is also imbued with a sense of urgency. Whereas in archaic societies and societies prior to the modern era, as Jeremy Rifkin explains:

...time is viewed as a cyclical process that forever re-creates an eternal image. In others it is viewed as a temporary exile from the lasting state of heavenly beatitude, and in still others as a pale replica or moving image of eternity. The philosophy of being is a spatial concept and holds that beneath our experience of time there is an ultimate reality of permanence. The philosophy of becoming is a temporal concept and argues that the ultimate reality of the world is pure change. Up until the nineteenth century, virtually every

---

105 R Sheldrake, The Presence of the Past, Fontana, 1988, says:
Superficially, there may seem to be no connection between this mythic view of history and the development of science and technology. Science and the accompanying growth of rational understanding are, after all, commonly supposed to have liberated Modern Man from the archaic systems of belief perpetuated by religion. From this point of view, science is altogether different from primitive mythical thought: though a heroic struggle against the forces of priestly prejudice, great men such as Galileo and Darwin have led humanity out of the darkness of superstition into the light of rational knowledge. But this familiar story sounds very like a myth itself. p. 257.

106 Eliade, explaining the historical and cultural significance of our changing view:
To recognise that one is constituted by what took place in illo tempore is not, moreover, a peculiarity of primitive thought and the Judaeo-Christian tradition. We have found an analogous tendency of the spirit in yoga and psychoanalysis. One might go further still, and examine the innovations added to this traditional dogma which affirms that the essential human condition precedes the actual. Above all it is historicism that has tried to innovate, by postulating that man is no longer constituted by his origins alone, but also by his own history and the entire history of mankind. It is historicism that definitely secularises Time, by refusing to admit the distinction between a fabulous Time of the beginnings, and the time that has succeeded it. No magic any longer illuminates the illud tempus of the “beginnings”: there was no primordial “fall” or “break”, but only an infinite series of events, all of which have made us what we are today. There is no “qualitative” difference between these events; all deserve to be re-memorised and continually revalued by the historiographic anamnesis. There are neither events or persons that are privileged: in studying the epoch of Alexander the Great or the message of the Buddha, one is no nearer to God than in studying the history of a Montenegrin village of the biography of some forgotten pirate. Before God, all historic events are equal. Or, if one no longer believes in God…before History…One cannot be unmoved by this grandiose asceticism that the European mind has thus imposed upon itself; by this frightful humiliation, self-inflicted, as if in atonement for its innumerable sins of pride. pp. 55/56.
cosmology argued that becoming was part of being or that change was bounded by permanence. 107

Furthermore, the nineteenth century was, according to Williams, a significant time for ideology. Ideology, before the nineteenth century was called the philosophy of mind, the science of ideas, 108 in order to distinguish it from the ancient metaphysics.109 In modern thinking, however, it became a theory. And a theory, as the word was used at that time, was meant to unite doctrine or ideology with the strongest sense of the practical (but not conventional or customary) activity: practice as action.

A theory is ‘a way of looking at the world, and not a form of knowledge of how the world is’, 110 and in their freshly rationalised agendas myth's binary oppositions and contradictions were re-identified in methods of interpretation, analysis, and classification and accepted, rejected or appropriated in and by materialistic and measurable theories. But as Rupert Sheldrake points out:

> Scientific theories themselves have origins 111, and they are often associated with stories that sound very much like myths. Thus, for example, according to Descartes himself his philosophy was inspired by an encounter with an Angel of Truth in a dream; and Newton’s theory of gravitation, the grandest theory of classical physics, is said to have come to him under an apple tree when a fruit of the tree fell on his head. There are few great innovators whose stories are devoid of legendary features; and some, like Einstein,
are widely seen with being endowed with the spirit of genius; others, like Marx, Darwin, and Freud, are often compared to Old Testament.  

Not only are certain scientists elevated to archetypal heroes, their theories in practical application become part of an ideologically constructed apparatus, a sociable god, which is time, and therefore, contextually specific. And further, as dominant models of reality become natural, seemingly coherent, and powerful in particular groups, it doesn’t matter whether these mythical mutations are real or not, their influence, in practice, is real. In a modern society in the grip of ideological crisis, literature, according to Eagleton, ‘in the meaning of the word we have inherited, is an ideology’.  

Mythologies

The conceptualisation of myth in contemporary meanings perpetuates myth’s traditional meaning in certain ways, and articulates them in the ideological constructions of this time. Eliade (and no doubt many others) has explained myth’s timeless, boundless content according to an understanding, and a hermeneutic which justifies ‘saying it, reveals how and why’, and where and when: myth as a revelatory experience.

And Eagleton further explains that following Saussure, anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss applies the scrutiny of classical structural analysis to myths. Myths can be defined only by their functional, and underlying, set of relations and these were:

... inherent in the human mind itself, so that in studying a body of myth we were looking less at its narrative contents than at the universal mental operations which structure it. These mental operations, such as the making of binary oppositions, are in a way what myths are about; they are devices to think with, ways of classifying and organising reality, and this, rather than the recounting of any particular tale, is their point.

Because, ‘the mind which does all this thinking is not that of the individual subject: myths think themselves through people, rather than vice versa’. Which means, in other words, that ‘beneath the immense heterogeneity of myths there are certain constant universal structures’. Myths are expressions of a mental process that expresses itself through language in ‘imaginary resolutions to real social contradictions’. This approach, as conservative as any structure, denies a progressive notion of history for it

---

112 Sheldrake, p. 257.
113 Eagleton, is putting forward the idea that society needs an ideology which is able to engage with deep-seated a-rational fears and needs at all levels: ‘in the nineteenth century social change and scientific discovery undermined the ‘cement’ of Religion as a powerful ideological form’ pp. 19/20.
114 Eliade, p. 15.
116 Eagleton, p. 90.
117 Eagleton, p. 97.
claims that change only occurs within a hierarchy determined by shifts in the linguistic system, as Eagleton explains:

Behind this linguistic model lies a definite view of human society: change is disturbance and disequilibrium in an essentially conflict-free system, which will stagger for a moment, regain its balance and take the change in its stride. 118

In this closed system, a myth is a story of eternally recurring origins 119: what seems like an origin 120 is merely diachronic manifestations of language. Language however, according to Belsey, only comes into being at the same time as society and:

On the basis of Saussure’s work it is possible to argue that in so far as language is a way of articulating experience, it necessarily participates in ideology, the sum of the ways in which people both live and represent themselves and their relationship to the conditions of their existence. Ideology is inscribed in signifying practices...in discourse, myths, presentations and re-presentations of the way ‘things’ ‘are’...and to this extent it is inscribed in the language. While ideology cannot be reduced to language, and more important, language cannot be reduced to ideology, the signifying system can have an important role in naturalising the way things are. 121

By repetition, a pattern of familiar linguistic expression creates meaning that always pulls back to an assumed origin. The common sense in language counterbalances anything new by its conservative demand for comparison, it seeks out what it knows by glossing over the differences, and what it accomplishes is the illusion of an acceptable level of sameness. And it is in this way that ideology, through the use of old words in new contexts, makes familiar a particular view of reality, nature and human nature which works to maintain the status-quo, and keeps the system at least functionally intact. And also in this way the contents of myth are related to the processes of nature and human nature, as they are commonly understood.

The mythological thinking identifiable in structural theory decentres the individual subject ‘which is no longer to be regarded as the source or end of meaning’. 122 And this

118 Eagleton, p. 97.
Anonymous myths give birth to other anonymous myths, multiplying and ramifying themselves without the fear of one being absorbed by the other, beyond and myth teller's control. Like leaves of grass, they grow and die following the rhythm of impermanent-permanent nature. pp. 61/62.

120 Berger:
All theories about origins are either naive or despairing, from Genesis to Darwin. Yet perhaps one misunderstands their purpose. All origins are unattainable...just as, on a personal scale, it is impossible to imagine a self before conception. Theories of origins are attempts to explain our ongoing relation to the so-evident energy of the universe around us. The energy of our consciousness in all its concentration is continually trying to define itself by and against the energy of the universe in all its incomprehensible extension. pp. 90/91.

121 Belsey, p. 42.
122 Eagleton, p. 90.
‘concrete logic’ in appropriated, and fragmented, ideological guise is to be found in the theories and often the practice, of past and present philosophical, psychological, scientific, religious, biological, political, economic and social disciplines, and in structures of organisation which portend to resolve conflicts and contradictions in successive synthesis. Specifically, in the study of literary works it claims both the function of meaning making and the production of text. But although these forms of communications share common ideological messages, they are often ambiguous and contradictory. Belsey says that:

The role of ideology is to suppress these contradictions in the interests of preservation of the existing social formation, but their presence ensures that it is always possible, with whatever difficulty, to identify them, to recognise ideology for what it is, and to take part in transforming it by producing new meanings. 

And while it is apparent that contemporary writers can reinterpret myths and may produce new ideological meanings, they are also reinforcing myth as an origin.

Ideology is an adaptable model of particular communication grounded in appropriated symbols and metaphors which are transparently familiar and which serve as secular description of reality. Mythical speech, says Roland Barthes, ‘is made of a material which has already been worked on so as to make it suitable for communication’. This description, because of its condition of partial and/or changing view, is always the result of fabrication and is therefore, only temporarily true and more or less flawed by omission and contradiction. Again as Belsey says:

Differences and distinctions which seem obvious, a matter of common sense, cannot be taken for granted, since common sense itself is to a large degree a linguistic construct. The difficulty of challenging common sense, however, becomes apparent in the context of the close relationship between language and thinking ‘thought is nothing other than the power to construct representation of things and to operate on these representations. It is in essence symbolic.’ (Benveniste 1971, p25.)

As a result, mental categories and the laws of thought tend to reflect the systems of differences inscribed in the symbolic order. ‘The varieties of philosophical or spiritual experience depend unconsciously on a classification which language brings about only for the reason that it is language and it is symbolic.’ (ibid.,p6) There is no unmediated knowledge of the world; knowledge is possible only through the categories of the symbolic order. Far from expressing a unique perception of the world authors produce meaning out of the available system of differences, and texts are intelligible in so far as they participate in it.

---

123 Eagleton, p. 90.
124 Belsey, p. 42.
127 E Benveniste, p. 6.
128 Belsey, p.45.
In *Mythologies*, Barthes puts ideology and myth under and onto the same cover and reveals their obvious relationship. According to Barthes, a myth is not merely a facade constructed in and by a shared communication model which is presently naturalised according to changing socio-cultural contexts. Myths are constructed in and by ideology and they have their origin in history. A myth is a method of fabrication, it is not defined by the object of its message but by the way it utters this message. Myth, according to Barthes, is a form, a system of communication, a mode of signification, a kind of speech, and a message: ‘Ancient or not, mythology can only have an historic foundation, for myth is a type of speech chosen by history: it cannot possibly evolve from the nature of things’.  

But, as stated above, a mode of signification, once it is recognised, may be deconstructed, reconstructed and opened to a re-reading in line with a present ideological understanding of the nature of things.

**Postmodern, myth/ideology**

As Belsey says, ‘meanings circulate between text, ideology and reader’.  

And it is not surprising that in our present culture and society the meanings of ideology and myth are blurred: myths have survived and new myths have been generated but their relationship to the present views of reality is diverse. According to Bohm, the structures attributed to myth and apparent in left/right functions of human thought deny individual intelligence:

...one can say that thought functions on its own, it is mechanical and not intelligent, because it imposes its own generally irrelevant and unsuitable order drawn from memory. Thought is, however, capable of responding, not only from memory but also to the unconditioned perception of intelligence that can see, in each case, whether or not a particular line of thought is relevant and fitting.  

But general meaning also relies on context and difference. Postmodernity is, Eagleton suggests, a comprehensive view, it is historical and philosophical:

---

130 Belsey, p. 144.

The left/brain dichotomy is examined in greater depth in *Originfive* when I am looking at this topic through the words of Leonard Shlain, but Bohm suggests that:

…the proper order of operation of the mind requires an overall grasp of what is generally known, not only in formal, logical, mathematical terms, but also intuitively, in images, feelings, poetic use of language, etc. (Perhaps we could say that this is what is involved in harmony between the ‘left brain’ and ‘right brain’) This kind of overall way of thinking is not only a fertile source of new theoretical ideas: it is needed for the human mind to function in a generally harmonious way, which could in turn help to make possible an orderly and stable society. p. xiv.

---
Knowledge is relative to cultural contexts, so that to claim to know the world ‘as it is’ is simply a chimera...not only because our understanding is always a matter of partial, partisan interpretation, but because the world is no way in particular. 132

As well, the ideology of postmodernism, is wary of the notion of absolute origins:

Part of what it parodies is past history...a history which is no longer to be seen in linear terms as the chain of causality which produced the present, but which exists in a kind of eternal present as so much raw material torn from its own context and cobbled together with the contemporary. 133

That the postmodern worldview is not the only worldview 134 is, of course, where the relationship between myth and ideology becomes sticky, and ironic. But while, in certain contexts, our society and culture can agree on what is probably illusion and what is, at least timely and/or temporally real, as Wilber says, ‘we cannot challenge or deconstruct the myths of traditional cultures where they are still the main social cement, and expect them to survive (or expect them to acquiesce without a fight)’. 135

Postscript 2004

While the meeting and overlapping of the magic, mythical and mental/ rational structures of expression are evident in Don't drink drive it's a laundry detergent, it is also a formulated expression manifested through the employment of the prevailing sciences of sign and the accepted processes and products of communication, and it is predominantly an expression of causal thinking and positional language. The dominance of a mental/rational approach, its superiority and its position both historically and hierarchically, is particularly palpable in the above essay and this reinforces Wilber's view that the mental/rational is the only structure that can tolerate structures other than itself, and, according to context and perspective, interpret them. In Gebser's view, however, the above is merely a critique (Verstand) and does not include creativity (Vernunft), and a balance between these expressions, critique and creativity, is imperative to the articulation of Integral Consciousness. According to Gebser, although ‘the ordered and sequential development is undoubtedly beneficial' they isolate only one

---

132 Eagleton, p. 201.
134 Eagleton:
Is postmodernity the appropriate philosophy for our time, or is it the word view of a jaded bunch of erstwhile revolutionary Western intellectuals who with typical intellectual arrogance have projected it upon contemporary history as a whole? What does postmodernism mean to Mali or Mayo? What does it mean to societies which have yet to fully enter upon modernity proper? Is the word neutrally descriptive of consumerist society, or a positive recommendation of a certain style of life? Is it, as Fredric Jameson believes, the culture of late capital…the final penetration of the commodity form into culture itself…or is it, as its more radical exponents urge, a subversive strike at all elites, hierarchies, master narratives and immutable truths? p. 202.
135 Wilber, Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, p. 251.
aspect for discussion. Further, the ‘words and concepts of present-day language are to a large extent ridgidified along the lines of the perspectival world’. 

---

ORIGINTHREE (a)

Acceptance of the indispensability of interpretation in appreciating artworks (not to mention simply recognizing them as art) opened a Pandora’s box that is now called “postmodernism,” a point of view that calls into question two centuries of assumptions about the elite and special nature of art. ¹

Artists, just like everybody else, do not see the world in any singularly privileged or objectively truthful way, but rather - just like everybody else -interpret it according to their individual and cultural sensibilities. What is more, since individual interpretations are derivative, people cannot even find a unique private world or style to express anymore. All the “new” styles and worlds have already been invented. ²

When we become aware of the exhausted residua of past and passing forms of our understanding of reality we will recognize more clearly the signs of the inevitable “new.” We will also sense that there are new sources which can be tapped…³

the Gessoflecting Paintbrusher

Originthree is aligned in image and interpretation. It is a thumb-nail sketch of artist Andrew Wyeth, an image that is, partially, a story of his life; a story about the tools he employs in his paintings, and a story that approaches meanings, experiences and thoughts told and shown through his words and images and though the words of others. Specifically, it questions skill, aesthetics and creativity and their contemporary interpretations and their relevance to Integral art. It contains, of course, aspects of Wyeth's work that relate to process, product, and state. It is also my story, a story that includes the aspects above but has its origin in ‘meeting’. The determining nature of ‘meeting’, as I have explained in Originone, is important to my research when understood in the context of a transformative acausal event. This aspect of creativity will also be given emphasis in the following chapter.

¹ Dissanayake, p. 199.
³ Gebser, The Ever-Present Origin. p. 3.
“Christina's World was painted in a rage. I was furious that Betsy wanted to build a goddam house in Cushing. I didn't want to be rooted down. I was afraid I was getting in deep like my father at Port Clyde with the big house and dock. I'd go down there to Olson's every day and put all my heat into that picture. I felt the tragedy of Christina, and I decided, “They're building that fucking house; I'm going to make this picture as powerful as I can.” “I have this hate inside me--and you got to take it out on the medium you're working in. That makes you struggle to push a picture even further, beyond the call of duty.”

The opening quote in this chapter is the opening quote in Richard Merryman’s biography Andrew Wyeth, A Secret Life, published in 1996. Merryman has been writing reviews, articles and books on Wyeth and his painting(s) for over thirty years, but on this occasion ‘Wyeth stipulated that the book, like his own work, should be “tough” that it should treat ‘truth as a form of honor”.

The above painting, Christina's World, was completed in 1948, and became Wyeth’s signature painting. It is a representation of his...
neighbour Christina Olson, who suffered from a ‘gradual, never-diagnosed muscular deterioration’ that had left her lower body disabled.  

Wyeth claims that the concept for the work was born fully formed in his mind’s eye but was inspired, according to Merryman, by an event. While visiting his long-time neighbours, Wyeth happened to look out a third-floor window of the Olsen house and saw Christina, dragging herself across the grass. The painting itself began after weeks of contemplation, and then for months Wyeth (using ‘thousands of minute, finicky brushstrokes of tempera’) refined the realistic image of house, barn, and field and not until these were complete did he add the figure. For Wyeth, the excitement of tempera painting is total involvement, and is as if ‘the world you’re creating exists in reality’. 

I kept thinking about the day I would paint Christina in her pink dress, like a faded lobster shell I might find on a beach, crumpled. I kept building her in my mind- a living being there on a hill whose grass was really growing.

---

8 Merryman, p. 7.
9 Merryman, p. 7.
10 Merryman, p. 6.
11 Merryman, p. 15.
12 Wyeth, in Merryman, p. 18.
13 Wyeth, in Merryman, p. 15.
After making detailed studies for the painting, however, he abandoned ‘the crippled contortions of Christina’ and instead worked out the pose with his wife Betsy as the model. This work launched Wyeth to ‘a stratosphere of fame’.

Andrew Wyeth, ‘Wind from the Sea’ (1948). Tempera 19x28ins

---

14 Merryman. p. 20.
15 Merryman. p. 6.
Wyeth spends months painting a moment. In 1947, in a stifling upper room in the Olsen house, a cool breeze lifted the ragged lace curtains and their delicate birds…metaphors for the femininity hidden by Christina’s misshapen, crippled shell. Wind from the sea was a favorite of the poet Robert Frost, who used to borrow it from its owner in Amherst, Mass.  

Andrew Wyeth, ‘The Sauna’ (1968). Tempera on panel, 24¾ x 28⅝

The dramatic successor to Christina Olsen, the trigger for a radical turn in Wyeth’s painting, fourteen-year-old Siri Erickson sits in her family sauna…a girl seemingly surprised, almost defiant. The painting was Wyeth’s first major step into the classic tradition of the female nude.

17 Merryman, p. 239.
18 Merryman, opp.p. 310.
19 Merryman, opp p. 310.
Expressing the ineffable: thinking and making

This tacit knowledge which comes to us through their skill and inspiration is on another level to that which comes to us through the spoken or written word. Artists and musicians have the remarkable gift of communicating direct to the spiritual level of those who are able to receive it. The mystic, on the other hand, has to try to translate his subjective vision into explicit words and complains that he cannot so express it and then the recipient has in turn to reconvert the message back into his own world of emotional feeling. Undoubtedly much is lost or distorted in this process of double translation.  

The dead flower, once alive, is the psychic equivalent of the verbal text. The paradox lies in the fact that the deadness of the text, its removal from the living human lifeworld, its rigid visual fixity, assures its endurance and its potential for being resurrected into living contexts by a potentially infinite number of living readers.

A dry and hot spring is a good start for mangoes (I've been told), for the setting of the flowers. In Mullumbimby that year, in September, it was dry and hot and windy, and, not liking dusty, blisterly heat, I must have left the children at the oval to watch the third-grade soccer, and walked home, after second-grade, alone. I know that I'd not yet heard of Andrew Wyeth, never seen his paintings, and I was probably watching the interview/documentary on ABC that Sunday afternoon in preference to the other channels which were all channeling sport. I do not remember but I imagine that I watched it fused and flustered and wanting to be still, and I know that it filled my mind with thinking.

---

21 Ong, p. 81.
22 And writing this now,
   from a breezy cool spring that's a-buzz with bloom
   and already kept promises promising fruit,
   I can recall scenes
   not pledges of progress but post-birth contractions
   of logical, literal beginnings. And yet
   writing this now,
   in the present midst of deciduous spring,
   while pondering the topic of Spring's significance,
   Spring's meaningful settings become other stories,
   tropical fragments gathered to form
   a possible cosmology of evergreens       Paddy Plasto 2/9/99
23 I have tried to find the documentary. The ABC suggests that it was *Christina's World*, and came from 'NVC Arts, Master Works from the World's Great Museums,' or from 'New York, Museum of Modern Art'. I have yet to confirm this, but it is likely that it is an interview regarding the specific work, with this title, painted in 1946, and the many works that form a sequence and chronicle of Christina's life.
I think he paints as though he understands and intends every mark. I think he paints ideas, impressions, descriptions, illusions, statements, all these, and I know that he makes marks that make me gasp. I think he tells stories, shows the inner: the essence, the intimate, by making the outside of an entity exquisitely detailed and illuminated. I think he places an entity, ordinarily slightly off-centre, into a sparse and overtly simple context with distance (sometimes closely sometimes remotely) visible or inferred: into a room or a place full of the stuff of lived experience; into an interior with window, into a lonely landscape. I think he takes us to doorways, and through walls, to woodland and marshland, to clumps of harshland garden and long grassy hills. I think he describes orchards, and harbours, and snow, that he places us before old wooden buildings, before shabby old planks and into the living wood surrounding other old planked buildings; that he takes us into barns or two storied farm house, that in the latter the shutters are open and adorned with the wispy fluttering of lace, and that in his space the lace, the cloth, even the mosquito-nets are still. I think that Andrew Wyeth has people and things showing and telling. And look, there’s no argument, or obvious chaos, they’re actually presenting themselves, in (un)subtle reality. I think he bestows, purposefully and probably unconsciously, on and into his work a sort of cherished timelessness: nothing is about to happen, or has just now happened. This is, and is not, a time of ongoing harvest and ongoing promise. Doorways are not exits or entrances. Walls and windows are not enclosures or disclosures, they are, paradoxically, timely connections. I think he works with, and from, a measured and delicate discipline that seeks and reveals, through his selected focus and interpretation, his world, his earth, his hell and his heaven. I think he paints the human condition as he witnesses it and feels it, as if his world is earthed by entities that materialize vulnerabilities and strengths: concrete truths. But, I also suspect that he has suspended them, the entities and their contexts, within an almost mystical background, an etheric of silence and space and that although he seems to paint the same entities, repeatedly and linearly, he is, rather, painting them constantly. And, though his human subjects are, in his works, always alone,\(^\text{24}\) I know that they are really, the two of them, together for days, and days: for years and years. Andrew Wyeth paints things that look, as if, real, and he paints people as they change and live and share the lights the shades the colours the shapes as if they are a part of his subtextual totality. I think *Christina's World*\(^\text{25}\) is a myth about struggle and aspiration.

\(^{24}\) I have seen many but not all of Andrew Wyeth’s paintings and drawings, there may be exceptions!!

\(^{25}\) *Christina's World* Houghton Mifflin USA,1982, presented 275 visual images: drawings and paintings of the Olsons and their world and a few photographs (which include some of Andrew Wyeth), with text by Betsy Wyeth. The painting and pre-studies of Christina Olson, her brother Alvaro and their farm, the buildings and surrounding country and seaside, in Cushing, Maine, were done in years from 1939 to 1969, inclusive.
The above response is, of course, a piece of prose, but it also presents a phenomenological interpretation. This method of interpretation does go deeper into the experience, the event of meeting with the work, however, but even though I know what I was feeling, I cannot be certain of what I was thinking when I first saw Wyeth’s work that Sunday in 1983, and I cannot embellish the real thought as it was. Without embellishments, then, I know I was awed and was most likely thinking, when the documentary ended, that Wyeth was some kind of master (I say ‘some kind’ to establish the certainty and ambiguity of my impressions, then and now,) and despite my knowing that traveling was financially and practically unlikely, I was feeling compelled, as if it was a necessary duty, to see his work up close. I knew that my experience had already been a meeting that warranted action, that it was an event of significance and that it demanded at least a move towards understanding and a response that would give it credence in everyday reality. And even if I didn’t exactly use these words, these comparisons or combinations, I was probably thinking that the thinking, the feeling and the knowing was alive, that it was breathing on its own, and that whatever the conditions, the climate, the essential classification, the metaphor, the symbol and the myth, I was sure that the Spring, that year, had been dry and hot enough for the mango’s flowers to set.

We packed our bags, ultramarine they were, and heavy cotton. Four identical bags which, being bereft of blueprint or pattern, would be at least half-filled with rules. Each, we determined, could take whatever they could carry, and each would carry whatever they took, (basic clothes were mandatory, and while accepting our geographical tropicality, we’d agree on these selections). And although ignorant of the bags’ banes (those little individual padlocks, their keys and the frightening freedom of leftover space) and ignorant that these were conditions keeping us in check, ‘going’ was, in many ways, an extraordinary achievement.

Thinking about the extraordinary leap now, I acknowledge that it was an inspirational, transformatory and ultimately nourishing event. Back then, I did not suspect that ‘creativity is something that “happens” to us, that fully effects or fulfills itself in us’, and with an almost exclusively magical zeal, I thought that an idea simply had to be pushed out and that it could become something: could be born. And, while I did not define what I meant by creative, I thought that originality came into existence when the force behind an idea was informed by the need for change. Now, although I’m sure that ideas are creative, that they happen to us, I am interested in the nature of thought, especially its participation in the creative process of manifestation. Thoughts, like things, come in all shapes and sizes. They can be concrete, flotsam and jetsam and, in some measure, they are products of the past. Nevertheless they can be both recollected and released from recurring pattern and memorabilia, so that they become part of the process of thinking, and simultaneously, in a different shape, size and substance, they can participate in the making of a new story.

---

26 Gebser, _The Ever-Present Origin_, p. 313.
The creative process is inspirational and it inspires action. What seems to be a simple matter of fleshing out an idea is, therefore, not just a matter of making it happen: when creativity is present in the swelling and forming and ripening of the substance, in the stuff between the kernel and the skin, there is always both spontaneity and progress, always an integral miracle, always a surprise, and always an original. I have been certain of this each time I’ve held, on those first occasions, another of my children: life is a union of process and product, and life thrives when it gives, and receives, appropriate nourishment to fulfill a need. This union, this communion, this meeting is the principal of creation and alchemy. Spring and birth are in the present, they are not habitual, and they are not (exactly) repeatable: they are origins that contain and continue, and evolve. Creative thinking is also, as Gebser puts it, ever-originating process. 27

Preparing to leave Australia was a new story that called for wholehearted participation! I was forty-five years old, a single mother of indeterminate means, a dyed redhead, and an escape artist. I had not traveled further than Papua, and I did not even have a passport. But it was hot and dry and windy in Mullumbimby that year, and according to the division of the hemispheres, it was Spring.

We flew out of Brisbane within three months: three green hippie kids dragging blue bags of summer clothes and assumed necessities, and an untrained heroine without a plot. We had all contributed, we’d sold anything assumed unnecessary, and I’d somehow managed to buy us, and have two thousand dollars over and above, a one-way ticket to the America and winter. (I also managed, I’m pleased to say, to talk very briefly with Andrew Wyeth some three weeks later, via the telephone.)

27 Gebser, The Ever-Present Origin, p. xxvii
Andrew Wyeth was born in 1917 in Pennsylvania. Andrew was home- schooled as a child due to health problems but was able to study with his father, N.C. Wyeth spent (sic) most of the year in Chadds Ford and the summers in Cushing, Maine, finding similar subjects in both places. As a child, Andrew spent many hours exploring and studying the woods near the family house. He later became recognized on an international level as America's foremost realist. Andrew Wyeth's most famous painting, perhaps the most famous 20th century painting is “Christina's World.” Maine neighbor, Christina Olsen, was the model. It now hangs in the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Wyeth often employs a high or low point of view for quietly dramatic effect. His subjects are usually seen in an austere, somewhat washed-out light. Color is a very minor element of his work and paint texture is completely absent. Wyeth was also a master of dry-brush watercolor. Some of his subjects in this medium include flowers and dead leaves in the woods or along the banks and streams.

Most major American museums have examples of Wyeth’s work. He was given a large retrospective at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 1967. President John F. Kennedy awarded him the Medal of Freedom and in 1970, Wyeth had a one-man exhibition in the White House, the first ever held there.

In 1990, he became the only artist ever to be honored with the Congressional Gold Medal. He was once quoted as saying, “I search for realness, the real feeling of the subject, all the texture around it. I always want to see the third dimension of something. I want to come alive with the object.”

---

28 Halls of Fame, Andrew Wyeth, accessed 19 December, 1998,
The Wyeth Center
A brief biography: Andrew Wyeth


October 19, 1932- Andrew Wyeth, who is home-schooled because of ill health, begins formal studies with his father, N.C. Wyeth.

1937-Andrew Wyeth's first one-man show, of watercolors painted around the family's summer home in Port Clyde, Maine, sells out at New York's Macbeth Gallery.

1940- Andrew Wyeth, age 22, marries Betsy Merie James, 18, of Cushing, Maine.

1943- Birth of first child, Nicholas. Wyeth’s painting *The Hunter* appears on the cover of *The Saturday Evening Post* (and he decides to turn down an opportunity to join the magazine as a regular illustrator, opting instead to pursue a career in the fine arts). His work is included in Lincoln Kirstein's show *American Realists* and *Magic Realists* at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA).

October 19, 1945- Wyeth’s father, N.C. Wyeth, and his young nephew are killed at Chadds Ford when their car stalls at a railroad crossing and is hit by a train.

1946- The Wyeth’s second child, Jamie, is born.

1948- In Cushing, Maine, where Betsy and Andrew summer, Andrew paints *Christina’s World*, with his famous model Christina Olson. The painting is purchased by the Museum of Modern Art.

1950- MoMA purchases *A Crow Flies By*.

August 1 thru September 9, 1951- Andrew Wyeth’s first major exhibition is presented at the Farnsworth Art Museum, Rockland, Maine.

---

1963- Wyeth exhibits at the Fogg Art Museum and the Peirpont Morgan Library; he is the subject of a cover story by *Time* magazine and is the first visual artist to be nominated for the Presidential Medal of Freedom (by President John F. Kennedy).

1964- The Farnsworth Art Museum pays $65,000 for *Her Room*, at that time the highest price ever paid by a gallery for the work of a living artist.


1968- Opening of the Andrew Wyeth Gallery at the Farnsworth Art Museum.


1971- Andrew Wyeth begins to paint Helga Testorf in Chadds Ford.

1987- *The Two Worlds of Andrew Wyeth* opens at MoMa, the museum's first major show to feature a living artist.

1987- The *Helga* paintings are exhibited at the National Gallery of Art, the gallery's first exhibition of works by a living artist.

1990- The Congressional Gold Medal is awarded to Andrew Wyeth, who is the first artist to be so honored.


1996- Development of the Center for the Wyeth Family in Maine begins at the Farnsworth Art Museum, Rockland, Maine, near Cushing and Port Clyde, where Wyeth painted his most important Maine work. The Center will include a new building containing a substantial collection of works (4489 pieces) by Andrew Wyeth, and a separate building housing two galleries of works by N.C. and Jamie Wyeth.

July 12, 1997- Andrew Wyeth's 80th birthday and groundbreaking for the Center for the Wyeth Family in Maine, set to open in June 1998.
A SHORT DESCRIPTION

One of the oldest painting techniques, tempera was widely used by the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans. The Byzantines were among the first to use an egg binder. It was employed by all artists, prior to the invention of oil painting in the fifteenth century, traditionally attributed to the Flemish brothers Hubert (?-1426) and Jan (1390?-1441) van Eyck. 30

In the 16th century, oil painting was perfected and nearly all painters embraced the new technique. However, icon painters of the Orthodox Church never broke the tradition and are still practicing egg tempera today. The first revival of secular egg tempera painting occurred in 1899, with the publication of the first usable translation, by Christina J. Herringham of The Book of Cennino Cennini . . . a painting manual of the 14th century painting technique.31

Tempera is an emulsion in which dry pigments are mixed with (or “tempered” by) an emulsifying agent with binding and adhesive properties. The emulsifier may be a natural substance such as animal glue, casein, or egg yolk. Natural emulsions dry rapidly and with time become insoluble in water…they “set”. This rapid drying is very advantageous allowing several layers of paint to be applied quickly. The layers can be numerous but have to be very thin, otherwise the paint may peel off or crack. The resulting overlay of semi-opaque paints gives tempera paintings their characteristic luminous quality. Tempera allows one to paint in fine detail.32

The first problem that a modern tempera painter has to face is the choice of a material for his panel, a carrier for the gesso ground upon which the gilding and painting are performed.33

The medieval painter did not have to consider the effects of central heating. In medieval buildings, unheated, atmospheric changes were gradual. The temperature shifted somewhat with the seasons, but the changes were slow, and the humidity of the air was not subject to such violent modifications. In the open atmosphere of an unheated stone building, wood is an admirable base for painting. In a modern house, often hot by day and cold by night, with corresponding sudden changes in relative humidity, parched in winter, and often swollen and damp in summer, wood may crack and warp disastrously, no matter how well it is seasoned.34

32 Egg Tempera Painting.
33 Egg Tempera Painting.
ORIGINTHREE (e)
Supports & Consorts

Actually, it was not total madness. I had established that Andrew Wyeth lived most of the year in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, that his work was always on show at the Brandywine Museum, and, when a staff member at the museum suggested it, I had written him a letter (to which I had no reply) and sent it, to him, care of them, requesting a meeting. I had phoned a local realtor, Century 21, on several occasions and accommodation seemed affordable and readily available. I had a small income (I’d never earned enough from painting to forgo my pension, and could still get it while away) and remember, it was the eighties and, coming from the alternative society of Mullumbimby, I knew I’d find seekers, artists, gurus and groups almost everywhere, and I foresaw, rather than mapped, an alternate trajectory and part-filled my carrying capacity with appropriately diverse tools. In my spare hand, I held my own blue cotton bag in which I had, cradled in convenient carrycase, an album: an overview with pictures of the beautiful Northern Rivers and representations and documentation of our (the Escape Artists) work; twenty or thirty charts on Bach’s Flower Remedies, rolled into a protective tube (these had just been published and produced by friends, an artist and a practitioner) and a portfolio of my own work, mounted and ready to frame. And, keeping it all together, in my other hand, I had a commitment: a freshly activated (an absolute, an inextricable, and a seriously inscrutable) commitment to change, to self-determination.

When we arrived in Chadds Ford, the Brandywine River Museum was featuring a three-floor exhibition of Andrew Wyeth’s work, and on our sixth day in America we are taken there, guided there. We’d been saved by our guides, our first landlady and lord, a day or two after they’d been contacted by their friend, a realtor from Century 21. They had been told and had responded to a story that was both improbable and, for a Realtor used to rich tourists, a real predicament. I knew, the realtor (who had turned up to meet us at the Ramada Inn and left us there, temporarily, dismayed) knew, and our surrogate family knew: we’d been rescued.

And now, we’re paying rent for the upper story of their house, and sharing a kitchen and dining room downstairs with our very large Jewish landlady who sits for hours each day doing crafty tasks, and our small quietly spoken gentile landlord: the Prof. of Sociology at an ‘all black’ university. She’s cooked us pancakes, and I’ve cooked us brown rice. We’ve shopped, appropriately. We’ve even unpacked a few summer things confident of

35 History of Escape Artists: Formed in 1982 and dispersed in 1985. We were a diverse lot. In today’s terms we would be called mid-career artists. We were accepted and respected in our hometown, Mullumbimby, and most of us were already stepping outside our world into the ART WORLD. There were six of us; Geoff Williams, painter, Madeline Faught, jeweler, Ann Williams, painter, John McCormick, photographer, Bruce Webster, maker of many things, and me. We sat around, every second Tuesday night and talked etc. We had several shared exhibitions.
warmth and the furnace in the basement, and they’ve given me contacts, artists and alternatives, and I’ve contacted.

But often at night when the house is quiet, and cooler, I sit on the edge of my bed afraid, and vulnerable and hesitant and confident. Years later when Quantum Physics touched my imagination I saw myself sitting there … poised…and as confident and as hesitant as a metaphor, a far-from-equilibrium anthropomorphic version of the quantum story.

and touching ground

Outside it’s snowing, and the pipes might freeze over, but that doesn’t stop us: guides and guided are ready to go. I’ve phoned the museum and learned that although the show was officially over on November 18, it is still hanging, now, in early December.

Oh God, look at these paintings, and these paintings of paintings. Often there are three complete versions of a work: a watercolour, a drybrush, and finally an egg-tempera. This technical progression, this parade of exacted change, deepens an image and brings it, clearly, to the surface.

One piece in particular stays, deeply but not clearly, in my mind, and the impressions that resurface are thus: an aged man, he’s pallid and frail and, though only visible from the waist up, is lying along the bottom of a white rowing boat. He is not obviously dead, but he’s out of reach, no one can touch him, no one can disturb his rest, or save him from it. The boat rests too, it is motionless on motionless heavy-leaden water. In my mix of memory and knowledge, I’m standing there in the Brandywine Museum in front of the magnificence of this egg-tempera work: and my eyes look, level, into water so dense that to breathe, I must, if I can, lift my eyes to the side of the boat, to be blanched by the contrasting light bathing him, bathing us, breathing us to wave’s break, to the sky, to the space, beyond the boat.

‘Adrift’ was painted in 1982 (see following page), it is of Walt Anderson, Wyeth’s friend for many years.
Andrew Wyeth, ‘Adrift’ (1982), Tempera on panel, 27 1/2 x 27 1/4.  

Merryman, ‘As early as 1982 Wyeth had seen Walt as a spirit in transit.’ p. 300.  
Walt Anderson and Wyeth were friends as boys. Walt ages in numerous drawings and  
paintings from the youthful, feral-eyed Young Swede (1939), to the evocative, fore-shadowed  
Adrift (1982).’
The Gessoflecting Paintbrusher: creating the beautiful, skillful, meaningful, innovative plot

To say what is beautiful you have to take a sophisticated group of people, people who know that particular art and have seen a lot of it, and say this is good art, or this is good music, or this is a good invention. …a good creative person is well trained. So he has first of all an enormous amount of knowledge in that field. Secondly, he tries to combine ideas, because he enjoys writing music or enjoys inventing. And finally he has the judgment to say, “This is good, I'll pursue this further.”

When Csikszentmihalyi quotes inventor Jacob Rabinow, he and Rabinow are referring to attainments, not to beauty in the traditional sense of ‘ideal’, and they are not necessarily referring to the qualities of the medium or its form, or to any experience of intensity. Aesthetics, in contemporary meaning, is concerned with beauty, but also it ‘is the analysis of the ideas with which we think about art’. The ‘we’ Michael J. Parsons and H. Gene Blocker, are referring to include anyone who does think about art, ‘critics, art educators, art historians, ordinary lovers of art, and even those who don’t care much about art’. Aesthetics, then, includes ideas about skill, design, form, rhythm, beauty, emotion, reality, communication, judgment, expression of significant ideas, and original and innovative work. But Wyeth's work is not highly regarded by all those groups of aesthetics who claim to know his particular art, and have seen a great deal of it. And, although Wyeth has an enormous amount of knowledge in his field, his work is only recognised by some of these groups as technically skillful. Wyeth is popular with collectors, according to Daniel Grant, but ‘he is a dramatic example of a peculiar phenomenon: a well-known artist who is successful with collectors but denounced by critics and art historians …if they care to mention his name at all’. “By the time he was seventy-seven,” says Grant, “Monet was lionized as the Old Master of Modernism. Almost seventy years after Monet's death and on the other side of the Atlantic, Andrew Wyeth's reputation has not fared as well. At age seventy-seven, he is still scorned by almost all major art critics, perhaps for being the Old Master of un-modernism.”

I certainly admire Wyeth's skill, and, looking closely at his work I am aware, for the first time, of the flat, static nature of my own painting method. And even though I know that my experiences are not the same as his were when he built the layers and layers of coloured flecks of tempera which create the illusion of reality in his painting, the emotional exchange I experience when looking into Adrift, is intense. I am sure that the intensity of Wyeth's experience lives in his work, that in this they are creative, that his paintings are intensely beautiful in form and medium, and, though I have not seen a lot of similar work I know that the discipline of tempera painting has been well learned and that the paintings' impact on me is accumulative.

38 J Rabinow, interviewed by Csikszentmihalyi in his study of creativity. p. 50.
40 Parsons and Blocker, p. 7.
42 Grant, p. 66.
Wyeth and Walt Anderson had been friends since they were teenagers, and although Wyeth completed this work in 1982, five years before Walt died of throat cancer, Richard Merryman writes that even then ‘Wyeth had seen Walt as a spirit in transit.’

I do not doubt Wyeth’s skill, he has painted in the demanding medium of tempera, and has apparently sought to master (and has mastered) it most of his life and this too has brought more criticism than praise, as John Gardner wrote in the National Review 1998, ‘Wyeth uses the same devices in painting after painting, in tempera and watercolor, as if human love could stand outside of time. After sixty years, they no longer spell sadness: they deliver a punishing dryness’. It is usually taken for granted that skill develops in doing. The ability to rationalise, classify, retain and communicate knowledge is, along with agility and expertise in material manipulations, a requirement that, over time, demonstrates progress and consequently supports the goal of transcendence. Skill is considered the only prerequisite in many theories that purport to identify creativity: skill, they say, is a standardised measurer, an evaluable foundation; skill is a capability established, necessarily, prior to beginning a work of innovation and, subsequently, skill is a means to, and a process of, realisation and materialisation. Thus, in these theories, the degrees of thinking and making equated to and considered essential to creativity are the qualities recognised and upheld as exemplars. But these are offered as objective measurements and at least from Wyeth’s standpoint, they do not go as far as the emotions go. Speaking about his experience and method, Wyeth says:

---

43 Merryman, p. 300.
44 Merryman, p. 300.
I'll take weeks out doing drawings, watercolor studies, I may never use. I'll throw them in a backroom, never look at them again or drop them on the floor and walk over them. But I feel that the communion that has seeped into the subconscious will eventually come out in the final picture.  

To my mind the master is the one who can simultaneously give the effect of simplicity and restraint…yet you can go right up to it and explore it endlessly with the greatest joy.

The way I feel about things is so much better than the way I've been able to paint them. The image I had in my head before I started is not quite…never quite...completely conveyed in paint.

There are always new emotions in going back to something that I know very well. I suppose this is very odd, because most people have to find fresh things to paint. I'm actually bored by fresh things to paint.

There is motion in Rembrandt…his people turning towards the light. But it's frozen motion; time is holding its breath for an instant…and for eternity. That's what I'm after.

I honestly consider myself an abstractionist. Eakins' figures actually breathe in the frame. My people, my objects, breathe in a different way; there’s another core…an excitement that's definitely abstract.

My struggle is to preserve that abstract flash-like something you caught out of the corner of your eye, but in the picture you look at it directly. It’s a very elusive thing.

Finally, when you get far enough along in a thing, you feel as though you're living there…not working on a painting…but actually working in that valley. You're there.

To me, it is simply the question of whether or not I can find the thing that expresses the way I feel at a particular time about my own life and my own emotions. The only thing I want to search for is the growth and depth of my emotion towards a given object.
To be interested solely in technique would be a very superficial thing for me. If I have an emotion, before I die, that's deeper than any emotion that I've ever had. Then I will paint a more powerful picture that will have nothing to do with just technique, but will go beyond it.  

According to the criteria of most contemporary critics Wyeth has not achieved his goals: his intentions are disregarded or deemed too subjective and he has not attained either an acceptably avant-garde aesthetic, or power in innovative presentation. Donald Kuspit says Wyeth's work 'falls outside the Modernist avant-garde concept, and no one wants to contextualize it. Wyeth's realism is passé in terms of the mainstream reading of art history. Technically, his paintings are very good, but the concepts are out of the mainstream, and the way of mediating their information is out of the mainstream'.  

Professor Sam Hunter, a leading authority on 20th century American Art, however, described Wyeth's appeal to the general public as comfortably fitting 'the common-sense ethos and non-heroic mood of today's popular culture, despite his occasional lapses into gloomy introspection', and further states that 'apart from Wyeth's conspicuous virtuosity, is the artist's banality of imagination and lack of pictorial ambition'.  

Regardless of what the critics say, Wyeth’s work is popular. But, as Merryman points out, Wyeth takes a dour view of his popularity:  

I am an example of publicity...a great deal of it. I'm grateful because it gives me the freedom to go and try to do better. But I never had any great idea that these people are understanding what I'm doing. And they don't. I think you get fastidious if you want every little brushstroke to be understood by the public. That's a bunch of crap. Very precious. Let's be sensible about this. I put a lot of things into my work which are very personal to me. So how can the public feel these things? I think most people get to my work through the back door. They're attracted by the realism and they sense the emotion and the abstraction...and eventually, I hope, they get their own powerful emotion.  

Getting in through the back door is a metaphor that does not evoke an objective view of any creative work. The aesthetic orders imposed on art and creativity are primarily on product and the mental and practical skills of production which are identifiable in progress, innovation and projection, rather than process, interpretive and emotional exchange, need and authenticity. These imposed orders are value judgments made according to accepted criteria in particular fields. Thus, sequential learning,
attainment, acquisition, assimilation, demonstration, and/or the blessing of natural
talent or genius are considered relevant, necessary and significant to the determination
and the worth of a work: socially, culturally, and individually. In this system, the mental
and practical skills of production are evaluated by those with specific and proven
knowledge in already established fields including the recognition of talent. Skill is
assumed by prior measurement and obtained by repetition and learned and practiced
experience; skill is also rationally premeditated thought/plan/plot: deductive reasoning,
rule following and cleverly rehearsed rule breaking; and, as well, skill is an agreed on,
and apparent, expertise that has accrued and surpassed previous measurement through
application. And when, as is usually the case, the pragmatic and aesthetic differences in
skill are evaluated after consensus of a field's measures, that context also defines its own
goals of transcendence. Although it is true that technical skill is essential to match
mental conception, to bring the idea to fruition, the question of skillful originality is
mute: the nature of acquired skill is accumulation. Acquired skill requires an individual
to adopt a method which takes part in and therefore, together with other (conscious and
unconscious, societal, cultural and individual) acquisitions, is an influence and a
precursor: skill alters, preordains, predicts, and apprehends, at least partially, the
apparently new conceptual and technical event.

Talent is somewhat different, it is a seemingly natural propensity towards already
recognised contextual accomplishment while genius, according to Robert Weisberg, is
the ‘extraordinary skill to do great work in a given domain’. The developmental, or
natural, ability to experience (make or think) something according to acknowledged
criteria, certainly tells an old familiar, overarching, story. Skill is the story of the master's
apprentice, it is an accomplice of competition, and a model of acquisitive/adaptive
evolution. Talent is a story of ordained becoming, although, says Weisberg, ‘there is
nothing intrinsically unique about an artist to make them possess genius; we, their
audience, bestow genius upon them’. Skill does develop in the making of a work, and
talent is a desirable attribution but, as with all aesthetic value judgments, I question
whether they are necessarily springboards to creativity?

Andrew Wyeth’s skill is, I think, unquestionable. And, as I was soon to discover, he
spends his life (how strange and one-sided is this common and ambiguous
metaphor...he spends his life?) honing, and honoring (with aesthetic sensitivity) the
possibility of transcending, it. Transcendence, of course requires an event of
significance, and it seems pertinent that twenty years after seeing and experiencing the
Wyeth documentary, and becoming one of his ‘audience’, I find these words from Brian
O Doherty:

While the gap between the avant-garde and the public has accustomed us to amusing kinds
of leap-frog and acculturation by myth, no such gap exists between Wyeth and his audience.

---

61 Weisberg, Creativity, p. 88.
Though his community’s values appear to many to be, like Wyeth’s visual conventions, obsolete, we must look for the energy sustaining an “obsolescence” that is taking so long to go away. The source of this energy is in the powerful resistance to change, in the fierce conservation of the values that give meaning to existence. In its stability Wyeth’s audience could be called, no matter how sophisticated its members, primitive. It shares superstitions, beliefs, icons, a circumscribed worldview, and ritualized modes of releasing violence. It is in fact a primitive community within, or side by side with, a progressive-destructive one, and appropriately it is served by an artist who, no matter how sophisticated his means, is primitive in his thinking. Wyeth’s communication with his audience is so instantaneous that it makes the McLuhanesque idea of viaticum via media seem a little forced. 62

In part, of course, I agree with this assessment...ironically, in his last statement, O’Doherty could have been referring to me. It is also true, however, that my meeting with Wyeth’s work and his thinking, via the media, was an event of significance, and that paradoxically, it evoked response: a leap into the unknown, a spontaneous change and the possibility of a new story.

Now, twenty years later, I do not question that spontaneous change is a process of evolution, along with its complimentary forward movement, but I continue to question whether specific knowledge, rational thought, skill and/or talent, and aesthetic mastery are prerequisites for creativity, and whether originality evolves because the individual goes beyond what they or others have done before. I question Csikszentmihalyi’s view that ‘a person who wants to make a creative contribution not only must work within a creative system but must also reproduce that system within his or her mind. In other words, the person must learn the rules and the content of the domain, as well as the criteria of selection, the preferences of the field’. 63 And I question whether the quality of medium, of form, of spaces, the accepted ideal interpreted according to context; the artist’s intention and the creative attainment of the artist, can only be recognised by a ‘sophisticated group of people, people who know that particular art and have seen a lot of it’. 64

I know, at least as far as a visual artwork is concerned, that seeing an artwork for the first time, without previously knowing anything about it, can be an event of significance. I know that there is more than one way to make a creative contribution and adding to an already existent field represents only one possible direction and sequence for evolution, the other is a leap into the unknown, a meeting and a creative response. I continue to uphold and appreciate the creative influence of my meeting with Wyeth’s work, it participated in a leap that was, in retrospect, essential to my evolution as an artist.

---

63 Csikszentmihalyi, p. 47.
64 Csikszentmihalyi, p. 50.
ORIGINTHREE (f)

Raising realistic hands offering multifarious fruit

The artist, says Frederick Flanck, ‘is the unspoiled core of everyman, before he is choked by schooling, training and conditioning until the artist-within shrivels up and is forgotten.'

In 1983, my work was self-directed play: an ever-changing exploration and discovery. I did have technique but it did not include the knowledge necessary to consciously create illusion, or to make visible a scenario already clear in my minds, my hearts, or my physical eye.

Paddy Plasto, Title/date unknown. Watercolour /ink on paper, approx, 40x30cm.

My method, in these works, involved a search into a chaotic ground of drying pigment: watercolours washed over paper or canvas so that they meet or overlap to propose and proclaim form and forms in relationship and interconnection. These paintings, like those works I have called Narrative Possibilities, differ in methodology from the usually pre-determined structure of ordering and classifying that defines Narrative, but employ only some of the discerning features of Narrative Possibility. The narrative still becomes apparent through the application of paint but as the paint medium is watercolour, it supports overwashes of colour that blend and infiltrate whereas the acrylic overwashes (Narrative Possibilities) are of very diluted white gesso and sometimes additional washes of acrylic colour, a process that creates multiple transparencies. The discipline of manifesting form is also very different in my watercolour works: each form is found and drawn directly from the dried wash using a fine 0.25 steel-tipped pen and black waterproof black ink...the lines cannot be erased and are not pre-drawn in pencil. A line that would be erased in other circumstances must remain, but it can, and usually does, prompt additional lines. Further applications of watercolour and drawing create more solid, but flat, forms and detail. With philosophical naiveté, I saw a parallel in line and life: once in existence an experience could not be erased, but it could be included in, could fit, a new context.
The two thumbnails above are both watercolour and line works. The top work, however, was done prior to 1983, the latter around 1985. The overall appearance, content, and use of media has already undergone greater definition, but it is in the tempera and acrylic paintings that a real change can be observed and the discipline of Narrative Possibility becomes the form.
The Narrative Possibility paintings are formed by forms found in the initial wash of chaotic colour too, but the forms are brushed in with gesso and lines of coloured acrylic paint. Forms continue to be found as layers of gesso are built and new washes of pigment are applied, rather than presenting a definitive context, however, the interconnections become multiple. The over-washes may appear to change the shape of a form and in each successive layer suggest a new one, but every form, new and old remain in foundation and/or influence.

Thumbnail: developing image in painting, from found form to detail (see painting p. 6.)
In both the watercolours and acrylics (Narrative Possibilities) the internal balance of the work must be maintained and is of prime importance. Philosophically, the line and form are never rigid in development but evolve, sometimes in leaps that are responses to meetings with other lines or forms that appear, sometimes merely glimpsed, as the work unfolds. In Narrative Possibility works, this event of meeting often occurs during contemplation of the work and when paint is applied spontaneously, it a state akin to awareness without thought. Of course a great deal of the work requires conscious consideration, and the conscious discipline to hold back especially when, in the original chaos, form first becomes apparent, and later when detailing with paint or line it is necessary for narrative clarity and applied detail. But particularly in the early stages of a work within these conscious considerations, considerations pause and, as if in response to an intuitive urge, forms are drawn in, and/or washed over with paint and/or gesso. This spontaneous leap, which is conscious action without pre-determined or determining reason, creates a connection of process and product and makes or renders transparent both new forms and old.

Sometimes a form is overwashed, but appears again as the work evolves. In the example above the form and the re-found form have each contributed to a very different narrative or Narrative Possibility.

Narrative Possibility is not narrative in the traditional sense, it is not simply a story or an impression expanded according to rules of deduction, and it is not a story that is experienced, discovered, or perhaps uncovered, sequentially, and yet, paradoxically, it is sequentially coherent. Narrative Possibility presents itself through discernment: each possible form prompts inquiry and the selection of form prompts not only further inquiry but responsibility and perceivable connection: the story is a dichotomy relayed and created within subtle, but not necessarily logical, boundaries.
And, although there is no pre-conceived goal, the narrative becomes apparent through the application of paint and, when deemed appropriate, through its further application. Within layers that offer change, the story proceeds by inquiries and actions that continually create new relationships and interconnections: information gathering and explanation are secondary. In this process, an image, and its part in the whole, is developed in movement so that any static interpretation is released, and the question of purpose left open. Narrative Possibility, however, also requires that some of the relationships within the story are formed and abandoned, and are thus of a temporal nature, while others, apparently consistent, alter or appear to alter when they are subsumed in new relationships. It's a process of movement that sometimes requires letting go of one possibility before it has become tangible, and finding, focusing and realising another. It's a process in which new connections generate different connections with, but without oppositions between, whatever is original and whatever is possible, by prompting glimpses of the old and the new simultaneously. Like poetry, Narrative Possibility also requires a way of seeing and a method of telling and showing that is different: what may seem irreconcilable or even paradoxical can be integrated when internal balance, appropriate fit and connection are determined according to insight and reason, and in acceptance that the content of the narrative is perceived as complex and multi-dimensional, its movement is up, down, in, and around. 67

There are, of course, many ways to tell, and to apprehend, a visual story. Some people crystallise the scope of their perception in as close an approximation as ability, media, context and intention can generate; some people manifest, into communicative messages or impressions, ideas, emotions, experiences, and imaginings via colour, line, shape and language. Like written stories, some visual stories seem to be and are, deftly planned, painstakingly executed, and pushed, pushed, pushed, pushed into existence. Like written stories, some visual stories seem to be, but are not, spontaneous emissions: they're worked over for effect, for illusion. Some visual stories perpetuate myth. Some are cleverly deceptive, and ambiguous. Some are mapless explorations, or journeys to unknown destinations. All are communicated in forms or abstractions that offer the possibility of interpretations.

My Narrative Possibility paintings are stories built-up and found in the formation of layers, fleshed from the inside to the outside. My earlier paintings, those completed before meeting with Wyeths', were unquestioned. In those days, of course, I did not think of my paintings, or see them, as more or less playful and naïve although I was, and they were: they were plays played on stages where players co-existed in benign, exotic, romantic and humorous relationship. I did not think about three dimensions, aspects, light source(s), or shadow clearly caused by angles, intrusions and takeovers. I did not set out to measure distance, count, compare or dictate size. I did not work with the intention focused on any particular, my impetus was to look into the matter. I didn't make assessments that resulted in accurate judgments made and kept or broken, but then, I did not know the

67 I have included this paragraph on Narrative Possibility from my Introduction. p6/7 It is appropriate to repeat it here, in context.
rules and I did not pre-draw or pre-plan. Instead of following an idea, ideas were found, and lost, in the play, not in the formula. I did not know about art, craft or perspective, and I couldn't draw or paint a thing that looked just like the accepted look of the thing. And although I did not understand the extent to which painting could become an acquired skill, I knew that there were some things I could not do. I never considered sequential time or tone, or contrast, and when I did think about light, light was something that shone through. Skill, value and illusion seemed unimportant to me, then, but they were not entirely absent: my paintings had structure, and balance and they told a story as it occurred.

I was aware of subtexts in my paintings, however, a question and/or a revelation that became apparent in the doing. These were not answers to problems though, they were suggestions of possible connections found in images from my physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual world. They were also, when they afforded glimpses of other worlds, not simply recognised but somehow imperative. I remember that I was reading Gurdjieff, Ouspensky, and Krishnamurti, and it is no surprise to me that my work was imbued with thinking, rather than thought.

---

68 Bohm, Wholeness and the Implicate Order, The word insight, as defined by Bohm, best conveys the idea I am endeavoring to articulate. I will approach this word on other levels later in this work and in other contexts, however, these quotes from Bohm sow the seeds:

…it is crucial that man be aware of the activity of his thought as such; i.e. as a form of insight, a way of looking, rather than as a ‘true copy of reality as it is’. It is clear that we may have any number of different kinds of insight. What is called for is not an integration of thought, or a kind of imposed unity, for any such imposed point of view would itself be merely another fragment. Rather, all our different ways of thinking are to be considered as different ways of looking at the one reality, each with some domain in which it is clear and adequate. pp. 8/9.

69 When my work was first exhibited in 1979, I was unconcerned about records or regimes and consequently I have only a few slides or photographs of these early works. But I have kept a list of titles including Views from the Real World, An Experiment on Separating Personality from Essence, and Seeing Sleeping People. I probably do not need to explain that, at this time, I was ignorant of all academic approaches to and interpretations of, artwork. And though I did of course know modern work from classical, postmodernism or the ‘hermeneutics of suspicion’ these were not, as far as I understood it, in the picture. But with the advent of Postmodernism, as Wilber, The Eye of Spirit, points out, we:

came to view artworks as repositories of hidden meaning that could be decoded only by the knowing critic. Any repressed, oppressed, or otherwise marginalised context would show-up, discussed, in the art and art was thus a testament to the repression, oppression, marginalisation. Marginalised context was hidden subtext. p. 97.
POSTSCRIPT 2004

In the course of this present research I have discovered two other artists who have employed methods which may be compared to some aspects of Narrative Possibility. Artist Alexander Cozens (c. 1717-86) developed a new method of teaching which he called ‘assisting the invention in drawing original compositions of landscape’. He had been inspired by Leonardo da Vinci’s observation ‘that an artist could stimulate his imagination by trying to find recognizable shapes in the stains of old walls’. The following is an extract from Leonardo’s Treatise on Painting:

**LEONARDO DA VINCI - from the "Treatise on Painting":**

Rules for the Painter

“The person who does not love to the same degree all things present in the art of painting will not be a Universalist; It is the same with the one who does not like landscapes and considers they merit only a brief and simple study. As the master Boticelli stated, such a study is useful because just by throwing a sponge soaked with various colors against a wall to make a stain, one can find a beautiful landscape. If it is true that in this stain various inventions can be discerned, or rather what one wants to find in it, such as battles, reefs, seas, clouds, forests and other similar things, then surely, this is like the ringing of bells in which one can understand whatever one wants to. But, even though these smears of color provide you with inventions, they also show you that they do not come to represent anything in particular. And this painter produced very sad landscapes............”

A Way to increase and bring out the genius in some of the inventions

“I will not forget to insert into these rules, a new theoretical invention for knowledge’s sake, which, although it seems of little import and good for a laugh, is nonetheless, of great utility in bringing out the creativity in some of these inventions. This is the case if you cast your glance on any walls dirty with such stains or walls made up of rock formations of different types. If you have to invent some scenes, you will be able to discover them there in diverse forms, in diverse landscapes, adorned with mountains, rivers, rocks, trees, extensive plains, valleys, and hills. You can even see different battle scenes and movements made up of unusual figures, faces with strange expressions, and myriad things which you can transform into a complete and proper form constituting part of similar walls and rocks. These are like the sound of bells, in whose tolling, you hear names and words that your imagination conjures up.

Don’t underestimate this idea of mine, which calls to mind that it would not be too much of an effort to pause sometimes to look into these stains on walls, the ashes from the fire, the clouds, the mud, or other similar places. If these are well contemplated, you will find fantastic inventions that awaken the genius of the painter to new inventions, such as compositions of battles, animals, and men, as well as diverse composition of landscapes, and monstrous things, as devils and the like. These will do you well because they will awaken genius with this jumble of things. But, first you must know the components of all those groups of things you wish to represent, such as the members of the animal kingdom, as well as the components of the countryside, such as rocks, plants and similar things........”

---

Cozens’ technique involved crumpling a piece of paper, smoothing it, and then while thinking generally of landscape, but without conscious control, blotting it with ink until representation elements are picked out and ‘elaborated into a finished picture’.  

There is, of course an important difference in Leonardo’s search into and interpretation of ‘a work of nature’ and Cozens’ manipulation of medium, the latter being a work of art, and neither approach follows the process of Narrative Possibility in which finding and layering are essential. It is pertinent too to disclaim any connection with Rorschach’s Inkblot testing. Inkblot testing ‘is a psychological projective test of personality in which a subject's interpretation of ten standard abstract designs are analyzed as a measure of emotional and intellectual functioning and integration’.

Narrative Possibility, as I have explained, is not a test of personality, it is a process that requires a conscious move from chaos to order, and while it does not require previous knowledge of the ‘components’ of things, it does rely on research when detailed expression of form is necessary. (See details in faces, hands, and likeness in Whooping Crane and Russian Blue cat in painting p. 6.) But, first and foremost, Narrative Possibility involves finding form, disciplined selection, both considered and spontaneous change, manifestations of interconnection and internal balance, and interpretations that are not limited, standardised, or finite.

---

I'm not sure how I got Andrew Wyeth's home number, it was not in the phone book. It was probably given to me by the Brandywine Museum. I had probably explained that I had written to him, that I had just arrived from Australia, and that he would be expecting my call. But, I don't remember making myself known to them when we went to see his exhibition, so perhaps our landlady got it for me. When I rang him one evening and introduced myself he said, without hesitation, that he'd never heard of me. He also said that he would, if I insisted, meet briefly with me, but first he'd better let me know that he would consider it an interruption and of no use to either of us. “I only want to paint,” he said. When eventually I was introduced to a group of artists in nearby Wilmington, Delaware, all sorts of plots could have been hatched. I let myself be driven past his house though, and even if the fence was high and no structure could be seen from the road, I did see the land, and the hill, where he walked (in black cloak, I was told) with his dogs. And someone gave me the name of the pub where he occasionally stopped for a drink, and then someone else said there was a party and an invite could be arranged. But, by this time, other things were aboard, my kids were in school, and I was painting, very different paintings, crouched in an attic in Wilmington. And by now it was summer (a summer filled with occasions: with long light nights, with music and streets full of dark dancing neighbors,) and other layers were forming without need of a plotting device, and anyway although I did not meet Wyeth face to face, I knew I had certainly met with his work.

---

74 We lived in a three-story duplex in an area of Wilmington, Delaware that was then populated by many craft/trades people who had applied for and received a dwelling from local council for the sum of $1. The scheme was introduced when the area’s older buildings had become slums. The urgent restoration of these building was the contractual agreement for new tenant/eventual owners. Plans were to be submitted and accomplished work examined yearly with expected completion within ten years. As a social experiment this was intended to inspire and assimilate those who remained of the once dominate, and still poor, black council tenants.
The essence of each and every art is, in the main, the expression of the pre-rational and irrational, while the mind has the role of an ordering power. Consequently art resides for the most part within the magical and the mythical consciousness structures. Its roots probably lie much deeper since it is the form of human expression closest to origin.\(^{75}\)

Art, according to Gebser, is predominantly at home in the non-rational regions, so that, strictly speaking, any mental interpretation is inappropriate. Any interpretation of a work of art is also hazardous, ‘since what is expressed in tones, or assumes shape in buildings, or in outline or color, cannot be duplicated in language’.\(^{76}\) Music, painting, and architecture, says Gebser, create non-linguistic expressions:

> Whatever is a speechless, genuine, and immediate expression cannot be translated into words. The sympathetic, analytic, or comparatistic “speaking about” art offers us little indication, least of all about aperspectivity, although it is most clearly discernible…in the arts, the seismographic expressions of man.\(^{77}\)

In Gebser’s approach, Integral art and the aperspectival has nothing to do with art criticism and evaluation. It is not only something new but as it is new to the structure of consciousness, it has different concerns from previous consciousness structures. These concerns are visible in those works which present new valuations of time and space, which attempt to overcome rationalistic dualism by expressions that are formed by interconnections rather than opposites; and in the endeavor to perceive the world freely, universally. To a certain extent this means depicting an image transparently and from all sides, that is arationally and aperspectivally instead of by the limiting perspectivity of the three dimensional.\(^{78}\)

Wilber’s approach is rather different. He states that the artwork and its expression are only two of the aspects to be considered in integral interpretation, and that interpretations of all aspects, although they will confer a different meaning on the artwork, are essential to integral understanding. The artwork, therefore, does not exist in isolation ‘it exists within contexts, within contexts within contexts, endlessly’.\(^{79}\) Wilber, who necessarily approaches art from his four-quadrant model, maintains that an integral theory of art interpretation is one of the great messages of postmodernism.

An integral theory of art and literary theory, then, is ‘a multidimensional analysis of the various contexts in which …and by which …art exists and speaks to us: in the artist, the artwork, the viewer, and the world at large’.\(^{80}\)

\(^{75}\) Gebser, *The Ever-Present Origin*, p. 454.
\(^{76}\) Gebser, *The Ever-Present Origin*, p. 454.
\(^{80}\) Wilber, *The Eye of Spirit*, p. 134
In Wilber’s model (see p. 39.), the Upper Right quadrant is the actual material artwork and its theories focus on the relation between the elements in the material form of the work. The original intention of the artist is the Upper Left quadrant, and this includes expressive and intentional theories which seek to recover and reconstruct the original intention of the artist and to disclose, decode and interpret unconscious intentionality. The intersubjective cultural background of the artist is the Lower Left quadrant and its theories focus on the cultural construction of meaning and theories of reception, response and viewer response. And finally, theories that focus on the interobjective social system are included in the Lower Right quadrant.  

Integral interpretations include and transcend mental/rational interpretations, according to Wilber’s model. “As rationality continues its quest for a truly universal or global or planetary outlook, noncoercive in nature, it eventually,” he says, “gives way to the type of cognition he calls vision-logic or network-logic. Where rationality gives all possible perspectives, vision-logic adds them up into a totality, which is simply the new and higher interior holon.” Although art (and literary) theories might seem a rather narrow, esoteric, and specialised field, Wilber says they are “the absolute litmus test for any integral theory” and thus from his aperspectival perspective unless I, We and It are represented, findings will be reductionistic. An integral approach (and the consciousness needed to access, understand and implement it) is one that consciously differentiates and integrates, and one that transcends rationality.

Both Wilber and Gebser claim that art, like consciousness, evolves and if viewed historically, its evolution can be observed. As one of the few art historians who have traced the aesthetic unfolding of ‘artistic fundamentals’, Wilber cites Meyer Shapiro’s conclusions (summarised by Richard Wollheim) and his fundamental premise that images evolve, they progress, and in this movement each acquisition of new and more inclusive aspects of representation has a correlate in human evolution. Aesthetics evolve through seeing, learning, and incorporating. This forward movement began when our ancestors made figurative images of the animals they hunted without concern for the surface on which the images were inscribed. Development proceeded as surface was made to enhance, when the work was given boundaries, given direction, and given perspective. And, while not directly positioning his work as integral, Wilber refers to ‘the profound developmental progression evident even in Picasso’s wonderful wanderings’ as an example of the way elements of aesthetic perception are learned, selected and passed on by building upon their predecessors ‘precisely by incorporating and the transcending them’.

---

82 Wilber, *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality*, p. 185. See Glossary
...even when Picasso “regresses” to primitivism, he is using techniques and perspectives that were not present in the original primitives: he has transcended and included those fundamentals even as he tries to hide his own advanced techniques in the crudeness of his simple lines. 87

Gebser too refers to Picasso, but does name him as an ‘aperspectival’ artist, and sees in his work an example of the degree to which our previous structures of consciousness are present, and the degree to which an aperspectival worldview must be built on the foundations of the perspectival world if it is to surpass it. However, Gebser does not attribute Picasso’s achievement to his transcendence of rationality or to technical achievement, but to his ability to bring to his work all expressions of consciousness, latent and conspicuous, and integrate them aperspectively, that is to “presentiate” or show them equally present.

The drawing is neither unperspectival, i.e., a two-dimensional rendering of a surface in which body is imprisoned, nor is it perspectival, i.e., a three-dimensional visual sector cut out of reality that surrounds the figure with breathing space. The drawing is “aperspectival” in our sense of the term; time is no longer spatialized but integrated and concretized as a fourth dimension. 89

The presentation or making present in Picasso’s drawing was possible only after he was able to actualize it, that is bring to consciousness, all of the temporal structures of the past latent in himself (and in each of us) during the course of his preceding thirty years of painting in a variety of earlier styles.  

And, (despite his reluctance to interpret) he states that in the example above Picasso expresses integrality by simultaneously presenting the front, the sides and the back, or the whole, view of a man in which space and body have become transparent and timeless.

By drawing on his primitive, magic inheritance (his Negroid period), his mythical heritage (his Hellenistic-archaistic period), and his classicistic, rationally-accentuated formalist phase (his Ingres period), Picasso was able to achieve the concretion of time.

While Wilber has identified, in the historical records of Picasso’s work, a forward direction of evolution and Gebser has acknowledged that Picasso’s drawing (above) is an expression made possible by a process of integrality, Gebser includes the premise that this process has also actualized the future:

To the extent that Picasso from the outset reached out beyond the present, incorporating the future into the present of his work, he was able to “presentiate” or make present the past. Picasso brought to the awareness of the present everything once relegated to the dormancy of forgetfulness, as well as everything still latent as something yet to come; and this temporal wholeness realized in spatiality and rendered visible and transparent in a depiction of a human form, is the unique achievement of this temporal artist.

For Gebser, the meeting of past, present and future is salient to integral expression, and he sees Picasso’s drawing as an expression of the ‘pure present, the quintessence of time that radiates from this drawing’. Aperspectivity expresses the newly emerging consciousness, and although present and eternity cannot be conceptualized or imagined, in the above work they are rendered transparent and thus ever-present, evident and concrete. But, as the irruption of time and the new perception that is expressed cannot be related to linear progress it:

…appears spontaneously in consciousness and has the nature of a mutation. The new capacity of sight, breaking with the old and enabling perception of new interconnections and transparent vistas, appears suddenly like a leap, as it were: a mutation from the three-into the four-dimensional world.

---

93 Gebser, *The Ever-Present Origin*, p. 25. (his italics)
94 Gebser, *The Ever-Present Origin*, pp. 28/29. (his italics)
Wilber (like Gebser) supports the complimentary aspects of evolution, (aspects that relate to process and mutation, as well as progress,) and states that new and creative twists are evolutionary events, that…there is not only a continuity in evolution, there are important discontinuities as well. 96 But rather than an emphasis on spontaneity he identifies process as an event within the hierarchy of progress, and calls these events self-transcendences. Self-transcendence, he maintains, is a creative twist on what has gone before, it is simply:

A system’s capacity to reach beyond the given and introduce some measure of novelty, a capacity without which, it is quite certain, evolution would never, and could never, have ever gotten started. Self-transcendence, which leaves no corner of the universe untouched (or evolution would have no point of departure), means nothing more…and nothing less…than that the universe has an intrinsic capacity to go beyond what went before. 97

Wilber's approach to art (and his interpretation of it) is, of course, philosophical and his perspective is rational. The rationally articulated synthesis of all aspects of his four quadrant necessities add up to the totality of Integral art, and this synthesis is predominately intent on the integration of contextual meaning. Meaning must, like his model of evolution, incorporate and transcend previous meaning so that integral interpretation includes the artist, the artwork, the viewer, and the world at large and, thus, intention, context, and reception (as well as unconscious expression and reception), and subjective, objective and (socially, and culturally) interobjective and intersubjective meanings. However, as the model is also hierarchical, he identifies the artist as primary, as the vehicle in which the ‘creative twist’ originates, is conceived, and, because the artist goes beyond what they have done before, the event through which new meaning can be expressed. And, Wilber concludes that:

Without in any way ignoring the other numerous contexts that will determine an artwork, in many important ways we can date the beginning with an event in the mind and being of the artist: an interior perception, feeling, impulse, concept, idea, or vision. From exactly where, nobody knows, the creative impulsive bubbles up. Many contexts no doubt precede it; many more will follow. 98

Gebser does not equate creativity with any context, but he agrees that creativity is something that happens to us, however as creativity is the visibly emerging impulse of origin it cannot be directed towards beginnings. Creativity is a process that is ‘not continuous in time but rather spontaneous, acausal and discontinuous’. Creativity is ‘not bound to space and time, and its truest effect can be found in mutation’. Creativity is the manifestation of origin, and ‘through creativity preconscious origin becomes the conscious present; it is the most direct, although rarest, process of integration, and, even when realized for only one span of fractions of a second, can never be lost’. 99 Creativity

96 Gebser, *The Ever-Present Origin*, p. 43. (his italics)
97 Wilber, *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality*, p. 44.  (his italics)
is arational, and we ‘become aware of such presumably invisible processes only when they have reached sufficient strength to manifest themselves on the basis of their cumulative momentum’. Creativity occurs through an intensity, rather than an expansion of consciousness, and ‘depends on “knowing” when to respond actively and when passively, when to let things happen and when to make them happen, while hearkening to the magic events, correlating the mythical, and taking into account the mental’.

Gebser’s approach to art is arational, and, not withstanding context, he does not equate Integral art with a search for meaning, with the intention of the artist, with reception, with unconscious expression, with the aesthetics of beauty or any totality. Gebser equates Integral art with a new aesthetic perception that will go with a new mode of production. Like Wilber’s, this mode of production is fourfold, however, for Gebser it is an active incorporation of all structures of consciousness, archaic, magic, mythic and mental commensurate with their respective degrees of conscious awareness, rather than a rational synthesis of four quadrants however overlapping their contexts and interpretations appear to be. Rather than integration being dependent on interpretation, Gebser suggests that (although ‘the sympatthetic, analytic, or comparatistic “speaking about” art offers us little indication, least of all about aperspectivity’) there are three salient characteristics common to integral art. Specifically to paintings, these involve asking:

1. To what extent, is the irruption of time found in painting?
2. To what extent is there an emergent supersession of dualism? And,
3. To what extent does it have an arrational and hence aperspectival character?

And this, as his work is constantly demonstrating, requires a new method of articulation.

102 Referring to Picasso again, Gebser points to this artists’ arational attitude as ‘an attitude that does not presume any intentionality, since intentionality is perspectival and oriented’ and his ‘well-known remark, “I do not seek, I find.”’ Gebser, *The Ever-Present Origin*, p. 480.
103 Where the criterion of beauty dualistically includes ugly, it is ‘to a great extent irrelevant for the evaluation of aperspectival manifestations’, according to Gebser., although this is not a rejection of the beautiful as long as beautiful is not ‘a temporal convention or an aesthetic escape or an emotionally charged interpretation of elements which can be described only inadequately as “harmonious” or “natural...”’ Gebser, *The Ever-Present Origin*, p. 462. An aperspective image, he also says:

…demands more of the viewer than aesthetic contemplation based on the criteria of beauty; and the relationship of the two is palpably evident, in German at least, from the previously overlooked root kinship of the words schön (beautiful) and schauen (to view, contemplate). Both words have a predominately psychological connotation; contemplation is the mode of mystic perception, while the beautiful is only one - the more luminous- manifestation of the psyche. At least to the western mind, both concepts exclude the possibility of a concretion of integrality (though not of unity).

Gebser, *The Ever-Present Origin*, p. 24. (his italics)
Certainly there are overlapping aspects in the above approaches to Integral art. Wilber's model is predominantly concerned with a new method of critique and interpretation (its practice is a necessary next step in the evolution of human consciousness,) that synthesises contextual meanings, transcends the limitations of rationalism and, thus, expands knowledge and evokes integral understanding.

In Wilber's model, although every artwork, and every artist, presents an integral example, great art is transformative: regardless of content, it is ‘judged by its capacity to take your breath away, take your self away, take time away, all at once’. Great art, ‘in a simple awestruck moment, enters you and changes you’.

Integral art, according to Gebser, is the articulation of a new transparent structure of consciousness, and as ‘the mental is not even adequate to “comprehend” the mythical, not to mention the magical’ it is, necessarily, beyond rational expression. Most artistic styles since Impressionism, he claims, are spontaneous forms that attempt to discover a new and valid form of expression, and though diverse these forms have in common an emphasis on structure. An integral work, then, exhibits the transparency of overlapping planes, the absence of straight lines, a rapidly changing viewpoint, the interrelationships of colours and the ‘visible manifestation of structure lying “behind” and constituting things and thoughts’.

When looked at from either of these two approaches, that is from Wilber's theory of Integral art, and Gebser's articulation of Integrality, Wyeth’s work highlights degrees of similarity and difference. According to Wilber’s four quadrant model and theory of interpretation, the multidimensional analysis and synthesis of artist Andrew Wyeth and his artwork and their various contexts in the early pages of this chapter, has certainly given meanings that, when taken separately, each context does not possess. And, according to Wilber's interpretation, and from my experience, Wyeth's work is also ‘great art’. However, Wyeth’s work does not exhibit the salient characteristics Gebser equates with integral expression, and his paintings are not attempts to surpass perspectival three-dimensional expression. In practice Wyeth follows a predominantly pre-conceived plan that decidedly lessens the possibility of spontaneity, and an event of significance in the making of the image.

106 Wilber has included Gebser’s “pluralistic or multiple view” in his four quadrant model, and located him in the LowerLeft/collective worldview, represented by ‘intersubjective forms of awareness, the shared cultural meanings, values, and contexts without which individual awareness does not develop or function at all’. Gebser, who died May 4, 1973, may never have heard of Wilber, but Wilber, whose first book, Spectrum of Consciousness was published in 1977, has interpreted Gebser’s work as, primarily, the documentation of the evolution of worldviews, from archaic to magic to mythic to mental. Wilber, Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, p. 72.


Looking at my own work and Narrative Possibility from either of these approaches I have also found similarities, differences and relevance. I am particularly interested in, and support, a methodology that includes both Vernunft and Verstand. This distinction, as I explained in Origintwo, represents different aspects of expression: Verstand is critique and Vernunft, creativity 110 and, if Gebser is right, it is the balance between these expressions that is imperative to the articulation of Integral Consciousness. Narrative Possibilty is an attempt to achieve this balance but this balance is also pertinent to the articulation of my present research. An imbalance that favoured Verstand, would undoubtedly manifest as a deficient expression calculated by ‘the wrangling “ratio” in which analysis makes a finer and finer point of logic until the discussion becomes trivial’. 111

110 O. Spengler, cited in Feuerstein, pp.119/120. (his italics)
ORIGINFOUR (a)

*Originfour* is a move backwards and a move forward. *Originfour* is a pause between moves. And although it is not the sum, it is a summary and a recollection.

**Forewords: it’s Winter again (2000)**

It looks like another hesitant beginning, but a restless, chaotic, growing urgency and a sense akin to loss and vulnerability is initiating other marks. When these marks are manifest this state will not be evident, and they will have provided the opportunity and the material potential for another form to manifest, and thus a new arena for inquiry. In the action of making the next marks an ordering and a journey appear to come into focus, simultaneously. It is pertinent, I think, to acknowledge that this is the milieu in which inquiry often originates for me: it precedes exploration in both paint and word, and becomes the impetus to proceed. It is also important to acknowledge that this (now abstractly remembered loss of word, of form, of previous knowledge and experience, of any suitable starting point, of the necessity to act,) gives me again, a curiously certain but fragile trust in chaos. Whatever the similarities to other hesitant beginnings, this writing is taking place on a blue-skies-not-smiling-at-anyone day, a Sunday, a gray and unable to warm, mid-winter-metaphor, in Canberra. And, it is unique. With its own focus and what seems to be its own starting point in time, this work is already charting its own course. This work, this ‘way of knowing’, requires the co-existence of *Vernunft* and *Verstand*.

**With further dilemmas of meaningful exchange...**

This satchel of books is quite different:
it's cardboard not plastic,
its arrival unprecedented;
it’s hand delivered at noon not left leaning
too early for shadows
against the screen.
And it's addressed to Plato, not Plasto.

Its effect and its contents are
fortunately and unfortunately
more of the same.

---

1 Deakin University has library service for Distant Students and ex-students, I can order books On-Line or by phone and next day a courier delivers them to me. Usually they are delivered in large plastic envelopes (with pre-paid return envelopes inside). On the address label they have an authorisation to leave package at my front door if I’m not home. Most often, though, they arrive very early, in time for the first coffee.
ORIGINFOUR (b)

Taking off the lid...getting ready for another coat

The basic recipe for a Gesso ground is simple. It consists of one measure of glue size mixed with two volume measures of white filler. Variations are introduced by using different quantities of size and, more importantly, by altering the composition of the filler. White gypsum is the traditional material, from which gesso gets its name, but finely powdered whiting is a more common ingredient today. In fact, any of the white fillers can be used, and blends between them will produce different qualities of ground. In addition it is good practice to replace up to half the filler content with white pigment. This produces a more brilliant and more permanent gesso.  

It is winter again, and approaching the shortest of days, and I need, paradoxically, the time for reflection and forewords, to look into my findings thus far before moving on. Originfour, then, is more than a recollection and a summary, it is a contemplative pause between the layers; an introduction to and foundation for following layers; for further definition of meaning and intention, and for dialogue, with developing diapason, delivery and convergence. So here, on this gray, winter, unable to warm, Canberra Sunday I'm completing initial work on Origintwo: Ode to the typewriter and Originthree: the Gessoflecting Paintbrusher. And I am questioning whether this method of research can exemplify Narrative Possibility, and/or whether it can convey the creativity and criticism necessary to Integral communication.

While I know that completion might imply that questions have been answered, or that research has reached a stage of equilibrium, this is far from the case: no-thing is resting, and no-thing is closed. This inquiry proceeds by a process that requires its layers to be juxtaposed: a layer in question may stand out and appear central and foregrounded, while other layers will also appear to form peripheries, or backgrounds. Integrally, of course, every layer or aspect includes, in varying degree, all others, and while aspects or layers or marks may seem peripheral, backgrounded, abstracted, or absent, they are merely suspended temporally, and they are simply out of focus. In the context of my research, a shift in focus although outwardly teleological is one that continues to explore creativity as the source and an adjunct of change. But the dilemmas, fundamental in meaning-making and communication, have raised further questions and initiated experiences and events: they've pointed towards and determined the context, course and, in some instances, the structure of subsequent stories. In Narrative Possibility terms, after contemplation of the forms found thus far, the work is ready for another coat. A subsequent coat will surely strengthen established structure and reveal new forms and new interconnections.

---

ORIGINFOUR (c)

An angel in white stone, whose wing tips merge, in the winter light, with the high hawk-colored cliff behind the village...this stone angel holds the wrists of a soldier, whose legs have already given away, and who is slumping into death. The angel does not save him, but appears somehow to lighten the soldier's fall. Yet the hand which holds the wrist takes no weight, and is no firmer than a nurse's hand taking a pulse. If his fall appears to be lightened, it is only because both figures have been carved out of the same piece of stone. 3

Originone, has become, regardless of any initially stated intention, an ordinate substructure, a form, a support, a ground and an articulated move toward integrality. It has laid out an array of aspects that formed, reformed, reinformed and remarked, or were found, in and on the words, images and the stories it generated. These have demonstrated in Origintwo/three (through external schema, self-conscious informality, abundantly postmodern use of my own and other callithumpian written collections, and through consciously questionable methodology,) that what looks like a move away from structure, is simply a change in the way structure is presented, and that change is not chaotic, deconstructive or divisive when viewed as and in evolving organic layers rather than as an antithesis of order.

My position, although flexible, must continue to explore creativity (the source and adjunct of change) as product, process, event and state, through a four-layered structure: exterior (behavioral and social) and interior (intentional and cultural), while also acknowledging that creativity is necessary and essential to integral expression. More specifically, I must continue to explore creativity and its expression in text and image and not only to ask “What does it do?” and “What does it mean?” 4 but “How does it manifest Integrality?” I am aware that these integral aspects of creativity are aspects that need to form an evolutionary agreement, and regardless of how open-ended, multi-layered and generous this portends to be, it is an ideological stance that, apparent or not, now needs to be stated clearly: I think that life evolves, that we, as evolving beings, evolve individually and collectively. I think that evolution occurs, or appears to occur, both gradually (over time) and immediately (in the moment), and that, to put it in rational perspective, change can occur in every sense and tense. I think that evolution is both implicated in and prompted by need, self-determination, imposition and contingency, and that it is the impetus to and the process of change and its manifestation. Evolution is a product, an ongoing process and an event, and it is essentially creative. It is manifestation, and explication, in the making and like an ‘angle in white stone’ it is unfolded by integration.

3 Berger, p. 19.
4 Wilber, The Marriage of Sense and Soul, states that ‘the social systems sciences ask “What does it do?” or “How does it work?,” while interpretative or cultural sciences ask instead, “What does it mean?”’ p. 179.
Sharing a possibility: the same piece of stone

The labels and ideas that structure experience will naturally also shape and guide our questioning. But recognised as labels and ideas, they lose their power to confine the range of inquiry, and instead become elements available for investigation. For inquiry to operate freely, it cannot be bound by the ‘positions’ that the ‘bystander’ adopts. This does not necessarily mean, however, that those positions must be rejected. Indeed, it is not possible to reject one set of positions without adopting another.  

Thus far my work has presented several sets of positions often diverse and often cacophonous. And several of these acknowledge the reality and the realisation that my exploration of creativity is directed by the implicit necessity of academic research to display, exemplify, employ and encompass in words, other peoples’ theories, while searching for words, and displays, exemplifications, explications, and employments, that support, fit with, demonstrate and explain my own unique throne of thoughts, experiences, actions, aims, and feelings. As an integral aspect of my research, then, the written work is both creative and analytical and serves as complementary to my painting process, Narrative Possibility. As a method of exploration this way of writing articulates and demonstrates both spontaneity and succession in its manifestation while including other positions: it is composed of an external and internal story and the events encountered (as they are unfolded and integrated) as it is evolving.

Thus far, in this research, I have looked into the contexts, the relationships, the interconnections, and the similarities and the differences of an Integral approach and, as in Narrative Possibility, during the process of research some findings have progressed to a degree of detail, to a state of visibility and partial comprehension while others, initially obvious, have been ignored, abstracted, sketched-in, and suspended. I have also discerned, identified and described spontaneous events and questioned their possible significance to past, present and future events, or layers or coats or aspects or marks or tracks or trails or stories. Unlike Narrative Possibility, however, the research is a response to an expressed intention which, while purporting to be open-ended, multi-layered and generous, has generated in advance a criteria for selection, a position usually identified with perspective. Narrative Possibility does not articulate perspectival intention, it finds. It does not reject one set of positions and adopt another, but selects, recollects and unfolds interconnections. As a further example of this method the following images made by one of my young students are demonstrations of the early process of Narrative Possibility:

---

Montuori, p. 203.
Student C, First wash. Acrylic on canvas (2001), A3
Student C, Second working. Acrylic on canvas. (2001), A3
My work with students will be presented in *Originseven* when images, scanned and documented through eight or nine workings and reworking, visually demonstrate change and the sessional progression of a story as it is manifested. These recordings allow the process of manifestation and the creation of Narrative Possibility to be observed, it follows some of the episodic, incremental, and intentional changes, and what seem like creative leaps, as well as the suspension of elements deemed unnecessary. The foundational aspects (support, board, canvas, paper etc., and, in most cases, its ground or priming, the composition of paint, and its application,) can be easily identified however, according to the shapes and the forms brought to the fore. But the meaning of a painting and what it communicates, changes. Seeing each image change, and seeing the unfolding of a work in the found and recollected interconnection of images, allows the process and the images themselves to appear animated, alive. The work is seen forming, and reforming.

In continuing my research, while acknowledging the indisputable differences in the painting method of Narrative Possibilities and the writing of this work, I do not intend to abandon this process of exploration as there are also remarkable similarities. Look at the wealth of ideas, the shapes and forms that have thus far partly emerged:

- for the social and cultural history of words, thankyou Raymond Williams,
- for the artist-in-residence: his biography, his methodology, his history, his expressions and responses, and for his authentic passion and his part in my own unfolding story, thankyou Andrew Wyeth,
- thankyou Eliade for myths, and
- thanks Belsey for ideological insights,
- thanks Terry Eagleton for wordly glimpses of Literary Theory,
- thanks to 106, or so, books and their included fragments, thought-forms, and images, and most of all, thanks to Wilber and Gebser, for their contributions to an integral world-view.

And while I agree with Leonard Shlain when he states that ‘written words and images are entirely different “creatures”’.  

6 I can state that the story is growing sequentially and unfolding discontinuously and arationally. What looks like length, volume and structure has not been made manifest by an exclusively linear production and neither has its meaning. The thinking and the making, despite the method of communication, has not sought to solve an existent puzzle and has not looked for a piece to add to an already determined picture. Although Gebser points out that an arational attitude does not ‘presume any intentionality since intentionality is perspectival and oriented’  

7 the search for integral expression is intentional, but as it does not assume definitive intentionality it includes ‘intentionally’ both rationality and arationality. This work of research, through both text and image, is primarily concerned with integrality and seeks to find, unfold and

---

convey the interconnections of all expressive structures of consciousness and the progressive, discontinuous, and spontaneous aspects of creative evolution and change. My research, like Narrative Possibility, is an exploration in which each new piece of research, each finding, contributes to the whole. But each finding also reforms the whole by creating anew what is always and simply an aspect of origin. And it’s not that the origin changes but that what seems peripheral or discontinuous is being included by increasing possibility and shifting focus! Shifting focus at this stage in the written story (as is also necessary in the process of image creation through Narrative Possibility) means that some of the aspects must be selected: some research collections must be assimilated or deemed unnecessary distractions, and the forming interconnections acknowledged. But meaning making is selective, and while it continues to select it is an act of direction and an arrow. The selection process, the thinking and making that involves and evolves the forward movement of Narrative Possibility requires the constant discipline to let go and suspended, purposefully and indefinitely, some aspects which may have seemed absolutely essential and/or have already formed attachment; and some aspects that may have promised contribution but now appear static and may soon be irrelevant. Selection, however, is also a potential event, a transformatory event that is spontaneous, as if the selection process itself has been let go and suspended, and as I have shown on p. 104, some selections reappear and bring new meaning to an image or idea in a new context.

I have no doubt that as research continues, new ideas, forms or aspects will be presented but only after acknowledgment that some forms and already encountered ideas are too strong, too fragile and also too determining to ignore, or to suspend. As integral to my further explorations, then, in the following chapters:

I’m taking Wilber with me because he insists, and Jean Gebser whose words have been inspirational. I am introducing Leonard Shlain who will star in *Originfive*, and Terry Sands whose work *Towards a Change of Consciousness* is important and as yet is barely visible. These thinkers contribute a layer, an aspect of the story of Integral creativity that has, in part, become mine. My work, thus far, represents aspects of inquiry that have been brought to the fore and formed into a narrative, its ‘meaning’ however, while woven into and through, while joining-up and changing, is itself only one of these aspects. Revealing the process of communication and production, the methods of making, telling and showing, are another. And within these (and fitting into these and forming connections) are already established shapes: the shapes of history, the shapes of proven and suspended ideas and practices, the fragile reshapes of recollected and reflected experiences, the diachronic state inherent in evolutionary events: incremental and spontaneous, and the, as yet, unstated spaces. All of these are creating form and revealing creative process.

---

8 I am referring so often to Wilber because I have been interested in his work since reading *A Sociable God* in 1985. I have collected most of his books and I’ve eyed each of them expectantly, convinced that he’s sharing something wise and wonderful. (Sometimes, however, it feels to me as though he’s trying to convince me that he knows!).
Recollection

It is not memory but non-memory which gathers up the past. The past can be ‘wholly collected up’, but only when we renounce our memory, our ego-logical habits of accumulative serial remembering. Recollection is a very different gathering …a gathering embrace that thinks, without grasping, holding, trying to possess, into the dimensionality of time as a whole. 9

This year's research has been eventful, and it now includes another aspect, one that also prompts Originfive. Originfive is a journey not glimpsed in a dream or previewed through an old romantic song, April in Paris…(or perhaps it was an old romantic movie) that takes to stage and screen and plays out another possibility, unfolds another layer or perspective, another way of knowing text and image.

Its centre is Paris. It's April. I'm part of an audience, a guest at a lecture given by Leonard Shlain. It is based on his book, The Alphabet versus the Goddess, the Conflict between Word and Image, and I'm hearing him say, “The message changes when it is written down.” 10 And not only this, he's saying that the stories transferred in written words 11 and the stories conveyed by images create contrary views, and have been created according to opposite perceptual modes:

If they rely on linear, sequential, reductionist and abstract thinking they present a worldview that is essentially masculine, while a holistic, simultaneous, synthetic, and concrete view of the world are the essential characteristics of a feminine outlook. 12

In Shlain's model there is difference between the thinking and making, the showing and telling, 13 and the perceiving and interpretation of visual, and written stories. This is an overarching truth, according to Shlain, who explains that written words and images call forth a complementary but opposing perceptual strategy. Images, according to Shlain, are:

---

9 D M Levin, The Listening Self, personal growth, social change and the closure of metaphysics, Routledge, NY, 1989, p. 268. (his italics)
10 Shlain is saying that words cannot be viewed like an image: all-at-once, they’re followed one-at-a-time because of both the method of communication and the reception of the information.
11 Shlain, The Alphabet versus the Goddess, pp. 1/2. (his italics).
13 In this story, as I have stated, by ‘telling’ I am including all mediums and channels of social and individual communication conveyed with words, and suggesting that the majority of these are narrative exchanges: they are about a thing conceived of, questioned or experienced. And by ‘showing’ I include the spectrum of vision actually apprehended in the external world, the world of imagination, and in all forms of other sight. (The majority of the latter are explained through the mediums of 'telling', as narratives: exchanges that convey, are about something.)
...primarily mental reproductions of the sensual world of vision. Nature and human artifacts both provide the raw material from the outside that the brain replicates in the inner sanctum of consciousness. Because of their close connection to the world of appearances, images approximate reality: they are concrete. The brain simultaneously perceives all parts of the whole integrating the parts synthetically into a gestalt. The majority of images are perceived in an all-at-once manner. Reading words is a different process. When the eye scans distinctive individual letters arranged in a certain linear sequence, a word with meaning emerges. The meaning of a sentence, such as the one you are now reading, progresses word by word. Comprehension depends on the sentence’s syntax, the particular horizontal sequence in which its grammatical elements appear. The use of analysis to break each sentence down into its component words, or each word down into its component letters, is a prime example of reductionism. This process occurs at a speed so rapid that it is below awareness. An alphabet by definition consists of fewer than thirty meaningless symbols that do not represent the images of anything in particular; a feature that makes them abstract. Although some grouping of words can be grasped in an all-at-once manner, in the main, the comprehension of written words emerges in a one-at-a-time fashion.14

Regardless of what the thinker or maker intends, consciously or unconsciously, (and regardless of their degree of intensity; regardless of meanings, ambiguities and attributions; regardless of the form of a visual story, its transparent structure; regardless of multiple contexts15 and/or frames, and regardless of impressions,) images and their vehicles of expression are apprehended, all-at-once. And regardless of what the thinker or maker intends, consciously or unconsciously, (and regardless of their degree of intensity; regardless of the meanings, ambiguities and attributions; regardless of the form of a written story, of its transparent structure; regardless of multiple contexts, and/or frames; and regardless of impressions,) written texts as vehicles of expression are comprehended one-at-a time. Both words and images, however, can convey an impression so that an idea, feeling, experience and image, previously unseen, unimagined, unconsidered, unfelt and literally unformed, takes shape in consciousness.

15 Culler:

…the notion of context frequently oversimplifies rather than enriches discussion, since the opposition between an act and its context seems to presume that the context is given and determines the meaning of the act. We know, of course, that things are not so simple: context is not fundamentally different from what it contextualises; context is not given but produced; what belongs to a context is determined by interpretive strategies; contexts are just as much in need of elucidation as events; and the meaning of a context is determined by events. Yet when we use the term context we slip back into the simple model it proposes. Since the phenomena criticism deals with are signs, forms from socially-constituted meanings, one might try to think not of context but of the framing of the signs: how are signs constituted (framed) by various discursive practices, institutional arrangements, systems of value, semiotic mechanism? The expression framing the sign has several advantages over context: it reminds us that framing is something we do; it hints of the frame-up (‘falsifying evidence beforehand in order to make someone appear guilty’), a major use of context; and it eludes the incipient positivism of ‘context’ by alluding to the semiotic function of framing in art, where the frame is determining, setting off the object or event as art, and yet the frame itself may be nothing tangible, pure articulation. Although analysis can seldom live up to the complexities of framing and falls back into discussion of context, with its heuristically simplifying presumption, let us at least keep before us the notion of framing…as a frame for these discussions. p. xiv.
And just as the written word is specifically mental and abstracting and must employ and be translated by linearity so too an image conveyed by words is formed, and made conscious, progressively. I understand that Shlain's explanation of linearity represents and employs rational consciousness and describes an aspect of evolution. And, as his theories relate to the differences and similarities of expression (via text and image) in practice and perception his specific ideas on these topics arouse my interest. However Shlain also brings another possibility to the fore. On the second page of *The Alphabet versus the Goddess*, he writes: ‘In the 1960s, Marshall McLuhan proposed that a civilization’s principal *means* of communication moulds it more than the *content* of that communication’. 16 Regardless of intention, context or interpretation, and rather than their content, according to McLuhan, it is the means, the technologies we employ in communicating our stories, which ‘insinuate themselves into the collective psyche of any society that uses them, and once embedded, stealthily exert a powerful influence on cultural perceptions’. 17

Shlain postulates that new technologies of information that are transferred, most particularly, through ‘the wondrous permutations of photography and electromagnetism’ or in other words the iconic proliferations ‘through the use of television, computers, photocopiers, fax machines, and the Internet’ have already began a transformation, and that we are, he is convinced, ‘entering a new Golden Age’. A medium of communication, then, is not merely a passive conduit for the transmission of information but rather an active force in creating new social patterns and new perceptual realities. 18

*Originfive* is, as is *Originfour*, a recollection and another coat.

---

THE NARRATIVE POSSIBILITY approach to painting

RECORDING TWO OF PAINTING: *THE TRYST*. THE OVER WASH HAS DRIED AND FURTHER IMAGES HAVE BEEN BROUGHT TO THE FORE...
ORIGINFIVE (a)

Language is destiny. Which one a child learns to speak will determine how he or she thinks. The unity and continuity of Chinese script symbolizes the character of China’s civilization, just as the rise and fall of Western civilizations reflect the constant flux of alphabet written languages. Like yin and yang, these two cultures are both opposite and complementary. Like the hemispheres of the brain. Each has the missing impute and outlook the other needs to achieve wholeness. The integration of alphabetic and ideographic, West and East, and left and right waits the next stage of evolution.  

Art and Physics and The Alphabet versus the Goddess, were included in my reading this year, and, when I remembered where I’d already encountered Leonard Shlain, I reread fitting bits of Uncommon Wisdom. In the latter, he featured in the conversations Fritjof Capra had with ‘certain remarkable people’ or advisers, in The Big Sur Dialogues, which took part in February 1979. At that time, Capra had called together a group of people who, although working in different fields, had already shared with him their thoughts, observations, and actions in regards to a ‘paradigm shift’. Capra was eager, ‘to see his advisers’ with whom he had interacted individually, also interact with each other and ‘to hear in an intensive multidisciplinary symposium how their ideas and experiences interrelated’. It was his aim to show that similar changes in concepts and ideas were now occurring in various fields. Now, twenty years later, when I also find, on the back inside strip of the dust cover of his most recent book The Alphabet versus the Goddess, Leonard Shlain’s email address I’m prompted to transmit the following:

---

1 Shlain, The Alphabet versus the Goddess, pp. 185/186.
2 In 1979 a paradigm shift was epitomized, I thought, by my move, and hundreds of others seeking an alternative lifestyle, to Mullumbimby, N.S.W.
4 Capra, …at one of my lectures at UC Berkley I met Leonard Shlain, a San Francisco surgeon with a deep interest in Philosophy, science, and art, whose friendship and interest in my work would become invaluable in my exploration of the medical field. During the lecture Shlain involved me in a prolonged discussion of some subtle aspects of quantum physics, and when we went out for a beer afterwards we soon found ourselves in the midst of a fascinating comparison between ancient Taoism and modern surgery. p. 179.
5 Capra, pp. 262/263.
6 I’m prompted to do this because I’m curious about this practitioner of change (in thought, action and observation), and more than interested in the possible correlation (a theory proposed by Shlain,) between Art and Physics. In retrospect I think that I am also prompted by my need to understand the term ‘paradigm shift’… I want to establish the difference between a ‘shift’ and a ‘change’ although I am almost certain that creativity is essential to any real change and its implementation. Wilber, The Marriage of Sense and Soul, states that “Paradigm” itself carried two broad components, which we might call “practical” and “social.” And specifically in relation to ‘new paradigms’ he says: Of all the previous attempts to integrate science and religion, by far the most influential and infectious, at least among today’s counterculture and a substantial portion of academics is that of the postmodern/paradigms…the notion that science is actually governed by “paradigms,”and a paradigm is simply one of many interpretations of reality, no one more binding than any other. Since, it is said,
hi..my name is Paddy Plasto...I'M a visual artist. Presently,though, I am in midst of =Ph.D.in Social Ecology...Creativity, Change and Integral Consciousness. Part =of my research is based on my experiences with children in creative =endeavors...exchanges with some students have been over six or more =years in a one on one approach. As a self-taught painter,I did not=have the luxury, or the hindrance,of imposed technique, and I am sure that skill is not a prerequisite for creativity but a more natural -occurrence, a fruit of the work. My method of teaching - encourages spontaneity but includes instruction at the time it is needed, and for a particular purpose.

In my current work I am -documenting, a new way of visual'story telling'.These narratives are - not preconceived or sequential: they begin with forms found in layering- of paint and evolve through discernment, relationship and balance, -similar to Randinsky's idea of 'internal integrity'.I am interested - in your ideas in Art and Physics..re the prophetic nature of creative image making, particularly interested that some of - my young students'visual narratives unfold without rational - explanation, and, because most parents insist on the works' 'meaning' - they have had to impose interpretation after completion.

I would very much like to - attend one of your lectures, have just looked at your website and noticed that you will be - speaking in Paris on 27th. I am having a break from work with students - for two weeks and I could, at a pinch, make a dash for this if it is - open to the public...otherwise..do you have time to talk now and then - online? or will you be likely to visit Australia? I consider some of - the ideas you are verbalising, and my own approach and work with children, to be pragmatically, philosophically, and spiritually essential for our future as -creative, more balanced and inclusive, social individuals.

Paddy Plasto

paradigms are culturally constructed, not discovered, the authority of science is dramatically undercut, and this leaves room, it is further said, for a “new paradigm” that would be compatible with a spiritual or holistic worldview. p. 26. And further he claims that although:

Empirical science, according to epistemological pluralism can tell us much about the sensory domain and a little bit about the mental domain, but virtually nothing about the contemplative domain. And no “new paradigm” is going to alter that in any way. Chaos theories, complexity theories, quantum theories...none of them requires scientists to take up contemplation or meditation in order to understand those “new paradigms,” and thus none of them gives any direct spiritual knowledge at all. They are just more mental ideas hooked to sensory perceptions.p. 36.
And I received this reply:

Please come. I am speaking 4/28 at 830AM in the Orsai rm on AVG. Sat on A&P at 130Pm. Tell them that you are a personal friend of mine and that you are my guest so you don’t have to pay. LS
Be my guest

Some time in our distant past, speech supplanted gesture as the principal means of human communication. However, the left brain’s speech centers never completely eliminated the influence that the older right brain had on both the creation and comprehension of oral language. If the spoken word was the result of delicately balanced assignments of the feminine and masculine sides of the brain, then the invention of writing completely upset this balance.  

To speak, I have to be already in communication with the mind I am to address before I start speaking. I can be in touch perhaps through past relationships, by an exchange of glances, by an understanding with a third person who has brought me and my interlocutor together, or in any of countless other ways. (Words are modifications of a more-than-verbal situation.) I have to sense something in the other’s mind to which my own utterance can relate. Human communication is never one-way. Always, it calls for response but is shaped in its very form and content by anticipated response.

Marshall McLuhan pointed out the critical importance of a new communication technology when he coined his famous aphorism, “the medium is the message.” In The Gutenberg Galaxy, he proposed that the content of information exchanged in a particular medium such as oral speech or the alphabetic written word is profoundly affected by the process used to transmit that information. The process, more than the original quality of the information, ultimately has a greater effect on the civilization's art, philosophy, science, and religion.

My journey to Paris to hear Shlain’s lectures in April this year has raised more questions about the how of creativity, the innate and invented differences in the methods and mediums we employ to communicate, and the nature of change. Leonard Shlain employs many aspects of communication to get a message across. Through

---

7 Shlain, The Alphabet versus the Goddess, p. 42.
8 Ong, p. 176.
technological manipulation, selections of appropriate, familiar, and collected images and texts and by cleverly articulated oral readings, gesture, good timing, and charismatic flair, he shows, tells, and demonstrates the complexity of stories. Certainly the medium is a message but McLuhan (and Shlain) are not referring to the naïve theory that explains communication as that which occurs via a pipeline transfer of units of material called ‘information’ from one place to another.  

McLuhan (and Shlain) state that the predominant media of a culture or society influences people, changes their lives, not the content of the message it tells or shows, and that the present technological mediums of communication are creating an overarching global cultural message. Shlain further suggests that the processes of communication we employ, whether deemed natural or invented, are extensions of the human mind, ways of knowing, and that a shift or change in the communicative process denotes the evolution of the human mind. Historically, the message has evolved, it’s moved from gesture to image to speech to reading and writing and now, to ‘television, computers, photocopiers, fax machines, and the Internet’ to iconic information.

The human mind has moved, Shlain says in both book and lecture, from gesture to orality and to literacy and in doing this it has also incurred a shift from an essentially feminine outlook, ‘a holistic, simultaneous, synthetic, and concrete view of the world’, to an overarching masculine viewpoint. This shift, he says, involved the move from a right-brained perceptual mode, one which both ‘integrates feelings, recognises images, and appreciates music’, and ‘contributes a field awareness to consciousness, by synthesizing multiple converging determinants so that the mind can grasp the senses’ input all-at-once’, to its opposite and complementary left-brained mode: the ‘linear, sequential, reductionist and abstract thinking’ which defines the masculine. Orality and literacy, then, although not entirely left brain reliant are dominant extensions of human consciousness which require units of information to be communicated one-at-a-time. The right brain perceives the world concretely, it is non-verbal and can simultaneously integrate the component parts in the field of vision, synthesizing incongruous elements

---

10 Ong, describes the premise that mind is a box, it can: take a unit of ‘information’ out of it, encode the unit (that is, fit it to the size and shape of the pipe it will go through), and put it into one end of the pipe (the medium, something in the middle between to things). From the one end of the pipe the ‘information’ proceeds to the other end, where someone decodes it (restores its proper size and shape) and puts it in his or her own box-like container called a mind. p. 176.

11 S. W. Littlejohn, Theories of Human Communication, Wadsworth Publishing Company, California, 1983, says: ‘the media are so pervasive in personal, political, economic, aesthetic, psychological, moral, ethical, and social consequences that they leave no part of us untouched, unaffected, unaltered.’ pp. 268/269.

12 Shlain, Art and Physics, p. 399.

13 Shlain, The Alphabet versus the Goddess, p. 386.


15 Shlain, The Alphabet versus the Goddess, p. 18.

16 Shlain, The Alphabet versus the Goddess, p.18.


18 A process which, paradoxically, must fill in the gaps!
all-at-once.\textsuperscript{19} And, because the brain’s perceptual mode creates a reality that reflects its values ‘the right side is concerned with \textit{being}, the left with \textit{doing}.\textsuperscript{20}

28/4/2000: He stands to the right of a screen, at a lectern and beside a table. There, from the table, he projects via the screen, timely, relevant, collaged, and sometimes superimposed, images and information. There’s an electronic set-up and written notes within the stand and out of our sight. In our sight, he also projects the grace and the polish of performance: he’s moving, he’s turning away, turning back again, and he’s giving us a purposeful profile. He’s poised to communicate and by staring (as if) straight into someone’s eyes and pausing momentarily to be sure of their attention, he surprises, seriously and with punch-lining spontaneity! He’s an entertainer and a storyteller. And, as storytellers must do if their audience is to listen, he tells his story as if for the first time. I say ‘as if’ since Shlain’s story, his stance and his presentation have been meticulously crafted so that he seems, and perhaps really is, completely at ease! Perhaps he always does connect with someone’s eyes! I’m seeing, listening, and experiencing: Shlain/the images on the screen/the high ceiling/the periphery of people/the closenesses/ the paraphernalia, and I’m amused and interested and surprised, and inbetween making sense of the spoken words, I’m imagining him having a few beers with Capra.

The screen is central to the podium, and under strict control it also projects, simultaneously with the spoken word and immediate gesture, the single or conglomerate images. Art works, diagrams, photographs, words, and real life scenes are ordained or made-up so that, both in predictable sequence and (seemingly) out of order irregularity, similar and diverse stills are brought together so that, sometimes, the changing images seem to overlap. These images are intended to impress, support and extend his verbal narrative and although they’re visual data they include pathos and humor. Many of them are familiar: historically, culturally, and socially they’re known to the audience\textsuperscript{21} so that we know, or at least think we know them, from personal experience and different contexts, from somewhere else. It’s certainly complex: they, both the familiar images and the audience, are imbued with, and therefore bring other experiences, remembrances (and forgottens) of other contexts, and therefore parts of other narratives to the presently unfolding narrative: the intended and the response. I’m relieved, however, that many of the images do seem familiar as I’m aware that I’m actually in very unfamiliar territory. Although I’ve introduced myself as ‘the email correspondent from Australia’, and although I’ve been acknowledged as a guest and I’m now seated between Leonard's wife, to my left, and his old friend, a surgeon from San Francisco, to my right, I’m realising that Paris and Big Sur are literally and metaphorically, miles apart.

These are very different days. Here the narrative has been gathered, rehearsed, and is presently being performed for and with participants in the opulent Orsai Conference\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{19} Shlain, \textit{The Alphabet versus the Goddess}, p. 20.
\textsuperscript{20} Shlain, \textit{The Alphabet versus the Goddess}, p. 21.
\textsuperscript{21} These include images of Goddesses: ancient and modern.
\textsuperscript{22} I wonder how history will view and represent the present ‘era of the Conference’. I wonder if ‘conference’...
Room of the Paris Hilton, (which is downtown and just around the corner from The Eiffel Tower). It is part of the opening address in a room predominantly full of English schoolteachers attending The European Council of International Schools’ yearly conference. But there's fun in the air, in this overcrowded, well-ventilated ‘Room’, and after the presentation and the ovation Leonard Shlain and I do spend some time trying to talk: we’re in the foyer, while he's selling and signing copies of his books, exchanging whatever can fit into the little lulls that are born between sale and signature and social chit chat. When he answered my e-mail, he explains, he had assumed that I was living in Paris, or nearby.

It's not clear to me what he assumes now, but he probably assumes, when he jokishly suggests that it must be the case, that I'm a fan. Really I'm a little bemused: 'The World Wide Web and the Internet are', Shlain writes in The Alphabet Versus the Goddess, ‘both metaphors redolent of feminine connotations'.

When the break for refreshment is over, when the buzzing and animated gathering regather for their next agenda, and when the Convention doors are closed again, we talk a bit more and arrange a meeting time before his lecture on Art and Physics the following day, and he gives me a video, a prior recording of the lecture he has just delivered. 24 It's about mid morning now, it's Spring, it's April, and outside the sights are aligned with tourists: it's a holiday weekend and it's going to be balmy with long lit days and the urge is strong to be out there and part of it.

Being part of it is not really the province of the tourist, in this context it is a global myth. But the culture of the tourist is escalating, becoming conventional: look at us, we are the exemplars of a global cultural! We're jetting, hailing cabs, hiring cars, riding the Metro, busing it, we’re journeying out and coming home again, and we’re temporally and contemporaneously homogenized and separated. We’re the interfacing generation, we’re germinating the new stuff, but simultaneously, we seem to be literally longing to reabsorb our past. Here now, notwithstanding our agenda, we’re similar to thousands and thousands of other human beings: we’ve disembarked, we've aligned ourselves, we've checked our passports, and planned our time. And having the time, we've waited in line, sometimes for hours, to live again in myth and image and structure and history and to exalt and decry human capacity and capability. And, while the Conferencing Elite know that the group rates are fantastic we are also sometimes aware that the balance itself is shifting, that our quests for global solutions, our ability to receive and

will be understood as an experience akin to a religious experience. Will it be revered as a ritual that offered possible, and desired, inspiration? And will ‘Conference Rooms’ now ceremoniously, and usually opulently, adorned be remembered as the shrines they already are.

Shlain, The Alphabet versus the Goddess, p. 418. (I determined, then, to ponder this statement. Now, I think that, according to e-mail evidence, it does not equate feminine connotation with clarity!)

24 When I eventually got to see the video it seemed very different in presentation, it seemed to lack the warmth and animation I recall. Now, I have no way of ascertaining whether my memory has simply embroidered my experience, whether my experience of it now is different or whether the audience and the context of the lecture I attended somehow made his performance and my reception different. I imagine, though, that the contents are the same.
transmit global and individual information, and our face to face global activities are presently, and in different ways, awesome. We define ourselves by stories but do we define ourselves by the mediums we employ to show and tell them?

Standing in line later that day at the Musée d’Orsay, I think of the way Shlain explains the human mind, and consider his ideas in connection with these statements:

> The computer’s processes have unwittingly advanced the cause of women and images, even though these aspects of computer operation have nothing to do with the computer's content, which is the manipulation of information. Irrespective of content, the processes used to maneuver in cyberspace are essentially right hemispheric.

and I’m not sure, as I reach the entrance, if these words reflect the problems and benefits of electronic messages, particularly emails! I’m hopeful though, that there will be time to talk tomorrow about the ‘cause’ of images, and putting such thoughts aside I make my way to Odilon Redon’s luminous pastels:

25 Shlain, The Alphabet versus the Goddess, p. 418.
ORIGINFIVE (b)
Parallel Visions in Space, Time and Light

The physicist, like any scientist, sets out to break “nature” down into its component parts to analyze the relationship of those parts. This process is principally one of reduction. The artist, on the other hand, often juxtaposes different features of reality and synthesizes them, so that upon completion, the whole work is greater than the sum of its parts. There is considerable crossover in the techniques used by both.

Leonard Shlain’s second presentation in the Orsai room on, Art and Physics, is based, of course, on his book published in 1991, and it is, according to Capra, ‘exquisite food for thought’. In the Preface of his book Shlain establishes that he is a practicing surgeon naïve in his understanding of both physics and art and yet he is experienced in the ‘intuitive visual-spatial right-hemispheric mode’ and the ‘left-brained logic, reason, and abstract thinking’ due to the need in his profession to develop a ‘finely honed sense of aesthetics’ side by side with science and thus ‘to shuttle back and forth constantly between these two complementary functions of the human psyche’.  

Art and physics are, according to Shlain, examples of the brain’s right and left hemispheric viewpoints, or complementary views of reality, and his book is a thesis on their evolutionary development, distinctions, overlaps, and possible synthesis. But it is also an exploration based and built on several premises:

a. Any time a new means of communication is introduced into the world, a giant step occurs in the historical record.

b. ‘the history of civilization parallels the development of a single child.’

c. The right and left hemispheres, the rods and cones, and art and physics all provide complementary views of reality. Our synthesis of these pairs not only deepens our understanding of each and both, but also adds a new dimension to the mind generating energy for universal mind.

---

27 This title is also the sub-title of Shlain’s book, Art and Physics.
28 Shlain, Art and Physics, p. 16.
29 F Capra, on back cover of Art and Physics.
30 Shlain, Art and Physics, p. 8.
31 According to R Mehta, The Secret of Self-Transformation, Motilal Banarsidass, Madras, 1987: there is, indeed, a world of difference between synthesis and integration. The former is a construct of the mind. The mind, in order to understand anything, breaks it into parts. It can only proceed by analysis. That is the way of science and the way of the intellect. p. 78.
32 Shlain, Art and Physics.
33 In terms of significance for Western civilization’s subsequent development, the Ten Commandments’ moral weight received by Moses from God on Mount Sinai was equaled by the curious fact that they were written, not in Moses’ native language…hieroglyphics, but rather in alphabetic form. p. 29.
34 Shlain, Art and Physics, p. 139.

---

PADDY PLASTO/ORIGINFIVE
d. Three million years ago the human brain organised itself into a functional bicameral organ, whose purpose seems to have been to enhance the use of causality by keeping space and time strictly separate.  

e. In the child’s magical worldview, the subjective act of wishing can effect changes in the objective world of “out there”. Einstein’s conception of relativity and the later notions of quantum mechanics confirmed that the observations and thoughts of the observer enter into the calculations and measurements of the “real” world. Children at play, artists at work, and scientists measuring quantum effects share this in common: They are all creating reality.  

f. The discovery of a fourth dimension should be as momentous for our species as the introduction of the coordinate of time was to lower animals. By extrapolation, I propose that spacetime generates universal mind.

Art and Shlain

Prophets are those who speak of things before they come into being. To do this, they must possess a kind of spacetime consciousness that is not merely momentary awareness of passing experience, or just the ability to predict events within a scientific framework. Rather, spacetime consciousness …knowing all-at-once…is the fundamental ground of being unrestricted by the cultural limitations of three Euclidean vectors of space or Aristotelian notions of linear time.  

Shlain’s approach, at least as it relates to visual artists, is based on Paul Gauguin’s words: “There are only two kinds of artists--revolutionaries and plagiarists.” And Shlain’s premise is that some ‘artists’ images seem to anticipate new discoveries about reality’. He suggests that certain works of art ‘can be understood as the preverbal stage of a civilization first contending with a major change in its perception of the world’. The ‘art’ Shlain refers to is not necessarily the craft of art, the talent or technical prowess of an individual, nor is it the naïve art made by children. Revolutionaries create art, he maintains, that heralds a
major change in a civilization’s worldview’. Thus, some visual stories, or in his terms visual arts, are prophetic. The following installation by Lucas Samaras is an example:

A chair and table are set in a room containing only one door. Every surface of each object is covered with panels of mirrors; so are the walls, ceiling, and floor of the room. The viewer, like the stationary observer of perspectivist art, must stand in one spot (the only opening into the room) to look inside. Instead of a three-dimensional illusionist painting of deep space, coherent subjects, and organized composition, the viewer is confronted with a kaleidoscopic splintering of the reflection of light. The light, ricocheting off one surface after another creates a holistic, Cubist, simultaneous representation of space until it is all here. Top, bottom, front, back, and sides are all visible in the fractured silvered slivers. Further, because it is hermetically sealed off from the world, the room will never change. Time stands still forever. Even though the viewer may come and go, when he returns the room is the same and will forever remain inviolable. The moment of now within the room is infinitely dilated until it stretches into a changeless everlasting now. The most striking feature of the Mirrored Room, however, is the directionless all-pervasive light that supersedes space and time and welds them together in a union that is the fourth dimension.  

Shlain, Art and Physics, pp. 26/27.

Shlain, Art and Physics, p. 270.
I do not doubt that Shlain’s presentation will be important to me in many ways. I’m hoping that hearing his lecture will give me some understanding of the new physics interpretation of reality. But I am most interested in his ideas about art, especially his theory that the impetus to make art is a universal characteristic of childhood. And, regardless of whether my limited and probably confused scientific understanding is improved, (I’m keeping an open mind on this: perhaps the message will change and become clearer when it is spoken!) I am aware that Shlain’s vision of integration is of left/right brain synthesis, a union of doing and being, knowing and seeing and experiencing reality all-at-once and one-at-a-time. I suspect, however, that the process of Narrative Possibility already does this, that with this method of doing, being, knowing, seeing and experiencing, these complementary perspectives work together simultaneously, constantly, harmoniously and creatively to manifest an integrated story.

The lecture is to start at 1.30pm and, apart from a few technicians and photographers, when I walk into the hall about 12.30pm it is empty, but not for long. Among the first to arrive is Leonard’s friend, my seatmate from the previous day, with an eager group of chattering Americans who make for the front row. I’m waiting, several rows back, and when Leonard comes in to meet me a few minutes later we spend some time together again.

Now, as I write I find (just as I did when I played the video reproduction of *The Alphabet versus the Goddess*) that I can barely remember details of our exchange. It seems now that the endeavor was peripheral, overwhelmed rather than extended by its context. Central to my recall are the movements of those around us: passing, turning, backing-up and crossing, walking and sidestepping between rows of seats, sitting, and sometimes changing seats. These movements are part of and together create and increase a circumference of sound, a moving sound-swell layered with words and accents. It’s English words, I remember, not French: “Excuse me?” “Here?” “Further back?” And eventually, along with the sensation that time is running out, there’s the settled, more muffled fragments of conversation, the audible coughs and the laughs of the soon-to-be audience, the nods and waves of acknowledgment, the questions from hurrying organisers, the repositioning of light, the testing of mike and screen, and the bizarre undercurrent that that which is happening, isn’t.

---

45 Shlain, *Art and Physics*. In relation to children’s thinking, which he calls magical (in line with hierarchica model’s of human development) Shlain’s writes:

Magical thinking is the antithesis of reason. Because children are unable to separate the Cartesian *res extensa* (outer) from the *res cogitans* (inner), they place their faith in the verisimilitude of dreams, myths, and fairy tales. The psychiatrist Carl Jung explored these currents that well up from the psychic underground and proposed that the archetypal heroes, heroines, and monsters that dominate the mental lives of children arise from this universal pool. Though Jung believed that their power continues to affect us all our lives at a deep unconscious level, nonetheless our literal belief in them gradually dissipates as we grow older. The frequency and intensity of dreams and nightmares generally taper off with age, and most adults will readily concede that these epiphenomena lack the vividness and punch they once had in childhood. To be recognised as an adult, an individual must give up his or her belief in the Tooth Fairy, the Sandman, and Santa Claus. The price we pay in order to think as adults is the loss of our former naïve and innocent outlook. Most of us never look back, because the road is overgrown with thicket and we abandon hope of return. pp. 140/141.
I know that I told him a little more about my work and approach, and I know that I wanted to ask him if he had considered that some images or ‘works of art’ were, rather than revolutionary or plagiaristic, works of Narrative Possibility: stories manifesting magical, mythical and rational aspects of consciousness and open to many and ongoing interpretations, but I understand now that the Orsai Room at noon (or thereabouts) was not the place or the time.

The offering is over. It’s early afternoon in Paris and, probably because the holiday weekend is almost half over, only a few of us hang about to say thanks to Leonard. I’m not sure how many stories have actually been exchanged here. His stories, he says, were essentially determined by insight: an epiphany, which inspired a search for the ‘connection between the inscrutability of modern art and the impenetrability of the new physics’. 46 This is one story, another traces the historical development of science and sees new scientific (left-brain) models of reality as pre-empted in the images of (right-brained) artists. And another postulates that blindsight 47 is the gift shared by revolutionary artists. The overarching story, of course, is an exemplar and a correlation of worldviews, a story that foresees left and right brain perspectives unified in the reality created by their synthesis, and a reality in which, Shlain passionately proposes, ‘spacetime…generates Universal Mind’. 48

47 As Shlain, *Art and Physics*, explains it, this is the: …ability to see that which cannot be seen, present in the individual, can be extrapolated to the society at large. Revolutionary artists are endowed with blindsight. Time and again they have glimpsed a reality not visible to the rest of us. Artists, when asked, are unable to articulate their prescience. That blindsight exists has been well documented; perhaps it is not too much to believe that some seers, like the mythical blind Greek prophet Tiresias, can see that which is not visible. Artists are nonverbal prophets who translate their visions into symbols before there are words: Artistic precognition is civilization’s blindsight. p. 428.

Shlain also explains this subsequently in the following: Art generally anticipates scientific revisions of reality. Even after these revisions have been expressed in scholarly physics journals, artists continue to create images that are consonant with these insights. Yet a biographical search of the artists’ letters, comments, and conversations reveals that they were *almost never aware of* how their works would be interpreted in the light of new scientific insights into the nature of reality. The same principal holds true in reverse. Upon making his discovery, the physicist is usually unaware of the artist’s anticipatory images. Despite many deep friendships throughout history artists and scientists, revolutionaries in art and visionaries in physics seem peculiarly apart. pp. 24/25. (his italics)
Here at Duplex, in Paris, it's about 6.45pm on May Day, and there's dogs aplenty (predominantly poodle and presumably non-cognitive of onuses: late and early) waiting, in the rain, and ready to ride the Metro with their watchfuls and Alice. While boarding, the boarders (according to their understanding of sequence or analytical memory of past experience) experience embarkation almost simultaneously although they embark through different, automatically opening and automatically closing, doors.

Once aboard, enclosed and arranged, however, the boarders become travelers, and this shift, when brake is released and accelerator activated, precipitates, despite the conveyance entering the tunnel linearly, a similar and communal sense: the travelers also undergo the drama of entry almost together. It's audible, visible and sensational. It's sharp with metal clash and acrid stench (the latter subdued, in small part, by Lily-of-the-Valley and damp summer fur). It's a coupled move that severs and reconnects. It partakes.

“A tunnel,” Alice observes as the daylight disappears, “is a content of continuings and a continuous event, but what does this mean?”

Alice means, of course, that the meaningful content of the word, both noun and verb, while thus far appearing adequate for most middle-of-the-rail life-travelers, is no longer, in this context, up-to-scratch. Really, the present meanings are pre-occupied! For example:

Tunnel, still means an underground passageway. Still means both a burrow and a means of getting into or out of a burrow. Tunnel, still is akin to pipe, tube, carpal, Mont Blanc, and to Diodes, and still is allied with elided vision.

“The meaning of Tunnel,” Alice concedes, “still complies with these definitions, however as these definitions do not touch upon or partake of context or share in the event, the meaning of ‘Tunnel’ needs to be further qualified, put into and out of context, conjured, conjugated:”
Tunnel (n): this is a matter of whether the outer, which must be something, or the inner, which must be nothing, or both are alluded to.

Tunnel (v): it is also worth considering that the method, and the act, used in constructing or deconstructing may be more than a measurement of applied mobility, (and more to the point (s), whose?)

Tunnel (pic): the context of a tunnel can't be determined by naming of location; tracking historical and cultural significance; working out the matter of depth or distance and/or finding words or images to articulate appropriated comparison.

Really the ‘context’ of tunnel is always a matter of ‘through’.

Tunnel: everything stated prior to the last statement assumes the perspective of beginning and entry. Really, it is also a transitional event.

“Really,” said Alice, tacitly addressing her surrounds, “we have been temporally set free: we think we are speeding into a black hole, but we know that at some point the speeding will stop, and we can alight, if we wish. We know also that sometimes the stop is above ground as it is at Duplex and that, if a turnabout is executed, alighting is simply boarding in reverse. We know that sometimes the stop occurs within the -t-u-n-n-e-l-e-n-n-u-t-, and when this happens a way back into the dimension of the physical world is always provided.

In relation to tunnel, depth and distance are usually understood by observation or participation. Observations of depth and distance are acknowledged as matters of perspective, however it is also acknowledged that perspectives change, over space, and they can become blurred. And to an observer, who (seems to) remains stationary, they can be seen to converge. Nevertheless, whether on the other side of the world or in neighboring nearness, perspective is usually determined in space, by rulers, erasers, and the identification of possible light-sources, and these aspects are then justified by the revelation that documentation of perspective is also achieved by illusion. On top of this (the knowledge that this modernistic determination is spatially illusionary and limiting in duration,) it is then assumed that the above measurements and identifications will give external clarity and will pinpoint the observer’s central position, in space and in time. And they do! But how does an observer’s conception of the depth and distance of a tunnel, one that depends on perspectival manipulation, sequential duration, artificial amalgam, and centrifugal or centripetal force, establish context? Participation, on the other hand, usually acknowledges that which differs according to time and space and context, but is confined by these. See, this quote from Euclid, *The Thirteen Books of the Elements*, Dover, NY, 1956, p. 153.: ‘Parallel lines do not meet one another in either direction’, cited in Shlain, *Art and Physics*, p. 28.

Observation and participation, then, are specialised modifications that, separately, separate the external and internal: the dimension and the experience of dimension. To a participant/observer within the tunnel, however, it can be different: depth and distance are considered and experienced as aspects of external measurements and internal participation through which context is unfolding content. For those prepared to adapt to this approach it is wise to keep the following in mind: a tunnel, regardless of and determined by depth and distance, may either resurface, become horizontal, or go into orbit.

Comparison is not simply a matter of replacing a pictorial menagerie of imaginary white rabbits replete with improbable fob (images already depicted and enhanced by several winding-up and battery powered generations) with a digital, or another, species.
Actually there’s more to it: the stop (both within and without) has a twofold purpose, it provides, for those who choose to detour from their journey into the unknown and who wish to rejoin the known, a reentry: through automatic door, across platform and out/into via exit. And, as well, the stop provides another potential start, and another potential entry for those others who are waiting, wanting continuation, and the opportunity to travel on and in and through. 

Here at Duplex, in Paris, it’s about 6.45pm on May Day, and there’s dogs aplenty (predominantly poodle and presumably non-cognitive of the notions of late or early or again) waiting, and marking-time, in the rain ready to ride the Metro with leash-holders and Alice.

Now, when the train stops they move as one, bodies deep, towards the carriages. Now they board, one by one, through the line of open doors. Now, when the doors re-close, (no, computer it should not be ‘recluse’ …although the concept is diverting!) and the train moves to enter the tunnel they face, temporarily, every disappearing and potentially reappearing direction together. This is a shared story.

---

A tunnel, whether temporally inhabited by burrow-dig-and-dwellers, hutch-abiders, semi-conductors, or domesticated dogs en route with master or mistress to alternate destination, is not a resolution of opposites or a bringing together of parts or points to synthesis. A tunnel is the connector and the in-between and it is a construction that explains and further mystifies physical, metaphorical, symbolic and spiritual journeys. Externally (this identification is not referring to a solid periphery,) and internally a tunnel is both the entry and the exit and the identification of this really depends on the story. Externally, the beginning and ending of a tunnel can be physically measured by time and space because it exists in time and space, but the within of a tunnel is also always beginning and ending and continuing, it’s content is space-time.

---

147

PADDY PLASTO/ORIGINFIVE
ORIGINFIVE (d)
Shlain and Gebser

Language is destiny, which one a child learns to speak will determine how he or she thinks.\(^{53}\)

Shlain's left/right brain theory is valuable to my research, particularly as it relates to the linear process of thinking and communicating presently employed in contemporary Western societies. I do not doubt that literacy, specifically the written word, has profoundly affected and influenced the development of our mental-rational consciousness. The differences between one-at-a-time and all-at-once perception and understanding, and, as this pertains to the left brain's dominant influence in education, supports my conviction that sequential dominance preempts and perpetuates 'ways of knowing' that usurp creative expression. Shlain's further claim that left-brained supremacy can be applied to masculine values and ways of thinking, being, and doing as opposed to feminine right-brained intuitive ways and values is also important but to evidence these in detail is not the focus of this research. His views on change, evolution, and technology are pertinent however, and when compared to Gebser's, controversial.

Shlain proposes that our mediums of communication are extensions of our consciousness. In his overarching theme of progressive evolution and the transformative leaps predicted in the work of certain artists, Shlain suggests that these extensions are historically traceable in our evolution from neuron to self-reflective mind. In addition, these extensions are mirrored by a change in the process of information exchange and in new scientific models of reality. His argument includes the analogous proposition that 'the next obvious step up the evolutionary scale would seem to be the integration of individual minds to create a giant, towering ectoplasmic brain capable of generating universal mind.'\(^{54}\) But while advocating the advent of global awareness (an aspect of integral consciousness) Shlain puts a very different emphasis on 'the message'.

According to Shlain, 'the wondrous permutations of photography and electromagnetism are transforming the world both physically and psychically'\(^{55}\) and 'images, of any kind are the balm bringing about this worldwide healing'.\(^{56}\) (Shlain does not suggest that the message will eventually be both medium and content. But as he does say that 'the shift to right-hemispheric values through the perception of images can be expected to increase the sum total awareness of beauty',\(^{57}\) this possibility must be open to question).

Although the present technologies have possibly surpassed his expectations, Gebser

---

\(^{53}\) Shlain, *The Alphabet versus the Goddess*, pp. 185/186.

\(^{54}\) Shlain, *Art and Physics*, 'Mind and Universe, like wave and particle, constitute another complementary pair.' (Shlain is explaining John Wheelers proposition.) p. 23. In other words subjective and objective.

\(^{55}\) Shlain, *The Alphabet versus the Goddess*, p. 432.

\(^{56}\) Shlain, *The Alphabet versus the Goddess*, p. 432.

\(^{57}\) Shlain, *The Alphabet versus the Goddess*, p. 432.
was convinced, when *The Ever Present Origin* was published in 1953, that ‘while the integral is overdetermining and dissolving the mental-rational consciousness, the mental capacity of thought is being mechanized by the robots of calculation… computers …and this is being emptied and quantified’.\(^{58}\) The excess of quantification, according to Gebser, is consistent with the exhaustion of a consciousness structure and the change from ‘efficient qualitative to deficient quantitative values’.\(^{59}\) Rather than the balm and healing from image proliferation, or the expansion of mind that is transforming us and the world then, Gebser considers that computers are a negative omen and one to which the deficient mental world is surrendering.\(^{60}\)

Shlain's concept of an integrating consciousness is generally concerned with the syntheses of complementaries, and it has philosophical and physical roots in Neils Bohr's theory that ‘opposites were two different aspects of a higher unity existing just beyond out limited perceptual apparatus’.\(^{61}\) Specifically though (as Shlain is equally convinced that the syntheses of alphabet and ideograph will occur through the new communicative processes that denotes the evolution, and extension of the human mind), he is proposing that the medium is also the language.

According to Gebser, however, what is imperative for the articulation of integral consciousness, is a balance between Veratand (critique) and Vernunft (creativity), and he warns that:

- ‘the expansion of consciousness is merely a spatially conceived quantification of consciousness and consequently an illusion’,\(^{62}\) however …
- consciousness ‘is not identical with intelligent or rational acuity’,\(^{63}\)
- consciousness is not ‘a mere counterpart of objects and appearances but an observant onlooker and an active agent with regulatory functions’,\(^{64}\)
- ‘ the illuminative function of consciousness is definitely not restricted to spatialization and temporalization’\(^{65}\) and,
- rather than a syntheses ‘whether as the unification of space and time or their identity (both instances being unconsciousness tributes to the unity of the magic structure)’,\(^{66}\) integral consciousness is an intensification of consciousness.

A language that expresses the new aperspectival worldview will evolve simultaneously with an intensity of consciousness, although individually and collectively ‘it is necessary

\(^{60}\) Gebser, *The Ever-Present Origin*, p. 538.
for us to create the means with which we ourselves can jointly shape this new reality’. 67

The difficulty ‘rests in our attempt to elaborate something “new” within the framework
of “old” language’. 68 The creative and critical balance necessary to articulate integral
consciousness is an intensity that sustains ‘a continuous act of integration and directing’
and ‘the ability to survey those interconnections which constitute us’. 69

What we call reality, Gebser says, is determined by the type of consciousness that can
express it, but it is the intensity of consciousness, its dimensional modalities, that
constitute our perception of reality and generate appropriate language.

If as Shlain suggests, ‘language is destiny, which one a child learns to speak will
determine how he or she thinks’, 70 we urgently need a language that expresses
integrality. The present mediums of communication, the proliferation of images and
their perception will, according to Shlain, bring a subsequent change to right-
hemispheric values of tolerance, caring, and respect for nature. At the time of his death
Gebser did not accept this, but in 2001, at the XXVII Annual Jean Gebser Conference:
Worldly Expressions of the Integral, Heiner Benking and Sherryl Stalinski add a new
possibility. Although they agree with Gebser in the following statement:

Current technology seems to enable a very critical possibility of sharing “extra” virtual
realities. Through pictures, maybe even virtual reality, immersive cyberpictures or films,
we might easily get seduced to a dreamworld or fear and agony world, but these are not
real and concrete, they are fake, illusionary and part of an entertainment or edutainment
effort with open or questionable outcomes. 71

Benking and Stalinski believe that in the sharing of illusion, as stories or models,
individuals can come together in a perspective dialogue, in ‘a meaningful, shared
experience of co-creation’. 72 In the new and shared meanings generated by dialogue,
even cyberspace ‘as co-creative space-scape begins to fulfill part of its potential for
serving the evolution of consciousness’. 73 The language of aperspectival dialogue
integrates critique and creativity (Verstand and Vernunft) and thereby ‘includes the
rational, but not at the expense of interactive myth, magic, metaphor, stories, play,
artistic expression’. 74

---

69 Gebser, The Ever-Present Origin, p. 204.
70 Shlain, The Alphabet versus the Goddess, pp. 185/186.
71 S Benking & S Stalinski, Concreteness in Integral Worlds, accessed 13 June 2003,
Revolutionary Art and Narrative Possibility

The younger generations will already have an easier task to realize the novel consciousness we called a-perspective, an a-rational or an integral consciousness. (The different connotations which all mean the same concept result from the respective area from which the novel consciousness is raised into transparency or diaphany.) Because these generations have already been born into the climate of the integral consciousness which is presently becoming manifest. 75

In Shlain’s perception of ‘revolutionary’ art and my approach to creativity and Narrative Possibility our differences are clear. Shlain’s revolutionary art is the province of those artists who reproduce, in tangible form, experiences or visions that preempt a new worldview and new understanding, though often they have no understanding of their works’ future relevance, especially to science. 76 Narrative Possibility is a product, process, event and state; an expression of creativity, and the potentiality and the province of every individual. Narrative Possibility is a language that articulates and gives form to all structures of expression, including the rational and it is a discipline that requires ‘a continuous act of integration and directing’. 77

76 Shlain, Art and Physics, says that both van Gogh and Monet were ‘Revolutionaries.’ pp. 339-341.
77 Gebser, The Ever-Present Origin, p. 204.
ORIGINSIX (a)

In Originsix I trace the history of a twenty-year experience, those of working with children and adults both individually and in community art groups. As these were formative years for me and, therefore, years of discovery, questioning, and change, some meetings of significance are necessarily included. This history begins with a return, our return home to Mullumbimby after our long stay in America, so does Originsix.

The specific experience of the ArtWorkshop Groups that I initiated prompted my recognition and exploration of the differences in Art and Creativity and provided the impetus for further study. Initially, I did not understand that in our society the rational structure of consciousness takes control in early childhood when a child begins to read and write, and that children's creativity is affected by an education system that emphasises the rational mode of expression. But as this became clear to me many of the methods I instigated in the community group context became a means of helping children to realise an experience different to their school art classes which followed an Art Curriculum. Within the school system, ‘art’ has been made to follow the same rules necessary to the acquisition and application of other subjects like Reading, Writing and Math. The student must learn the rules, how to apply them and demonstrate both knowledge and skill. In the ArtWorkshop context, the social and cultural dynamic of the group and the possibility of Social Creativity also came to the fore, not only did we partake of and participate in collaborative work, but I began to understand the wider and deeper influences that had begun to surface in my own work. As Montuori suggests, the present general perception of creativity still disregards its collaborative nature and the social, political, historical and economic factors that help shape the lives and achievements of writers and painters, creative persons whose work we like to think is done “alone”. ¹

The extracts and the occasional representations, the events of significance: the meetings, processes, events, states and products that follow the ‘forewords’ (p. 27.) link the present time with the years 1993 and up to and including 1996. Some of these are snippets from publications and presentation produced during those specific years and reproduced now for the purpose of showing and telling a little of their context. But there is additional commentary: words and thoughts added and woven, sometimes surreptitiously, imperceptibly, and even unconsciously, into these recalls. Thus, stories from the past exist in the context of the present and in the spirit of extended inquiry. In 1993, for example, Narrative Possibility was just being fitted for a christening robe. Originsix begins, then, with a return.

¹ Montuori: This hard-core belief, which in some circles would be described as a perfect example of “ideology,” has multiple social, political, and historical roots (Montuori and Purser 1997). As an assumption about the nature of creativity, and about the autonomous nature of the self, it is not shared by most other cultures around the globe, and even in the west it has only become prevalent in the last two hundred years or so. This does not make it necessarily wrong, but it does suggest that there is plenty of room for further inquiry. What is the “focal setting” that directs our inquiry into these channels? When we look for the sources of the creative act, in what space do we seek to locate it? pp. 191/192.
Continuity and Contents: ‘…the traffic between storytelling and metaphysics is continuous.’

On the surface of things time is a great determinate: a concept of time is like a description of change. According to friends who met us at Mullumbimby Station when we got back from the US in 1985, it was as if only our obvious, surface appearances were different: like them we simply looked a little older. But I knew that I, that almost certainly my children (and possibly our friends too), had been re-formed inside by individual and collective events: we were potential harbingers of significant stories. In view of the fact that we'd been, we'd survived, and more significantly we’d returned, however, the moment we stepped to the platform, at least one of our stories was already told. It was as if Homecoming was written on tags, tied to our dirty blue bags. It was as if the event had been preordained by cause and conclusion, as if conditioned by plot, but then, when accepted as myth, acclaimed as a truly spontaneous, exemplary story.

To come home is to tell both a new and a recurring story, and yet, according to Berger, ‘those who read and listen to our stories see everything as through a lens. This lens is the secret of narration, and it is ground anew in every story, ground between the temporal and the timeless’.

In time stories change and change again whenever they are told. It is by narration that we live storied lives: we live our lives by letting our stories go free and by then adapting to, or reencountering, them as they are seen through others’ eyes. But the secret within the secret is this: while some stories are apparently the same and some seem familiar, others are fundamentally different: they look like and sound like snippets and, for them no lens, no contextual limit, is adequate. These stories do not appear to adhere in any centre: they’re not timely and they’re not adaptable because, on most occasions, they are completely foreign, absolutely unique and always peripheral. Regardless of our pliant or peripheral stories and regardless of actual baggage, I know that (the moment we stepped, carefully and without incidence, to stand sure-footed on home ground), we participated in an overarching Story, and it was re-created anew. Really we had bags full of stories, great wades of snippets, parcels of paintings, photos, postcards, maps, things with history, and even, perhaps, an esoteric reading or two.

---

   If we consider that story, the structuring of narrative, provides connections between myth and society and the psychological unconscious and desires of the individual, then the narrative structures that are adopted in the text control the telling and subsequently influence the personal story within the text that readers tell themselves. p. 5.
4 Explaining how a myth communicates, Elaide says that …the very fact of saying what happened reveals how the thing in question was realised (and this how stands for why). For the act of coming to be is, at the same time, the emergence of a reality and the disclosure of its fundamental structure. p. 15.
5 Berger, p. 31.
6 Berger, p. 56.
The Language of Home

‘Originally home meant the center of the world…not geographically, but in an ontological sense’. It means being at-one-with, at home with. And regardless of clearance by custom checkers, it means that some things are not declared that adopted cultural and societal differences play no real part in a Homecoming where warm welcomes include a certain, recognisable continuity.

Change, then, can be temporally selective: we were home and though this was not unreal, at the heart of the matter many things would have to remain fragments or foreign or merely flirtatious peripheries because transmigration does not guarantee re-constitution or assimilation. Even in the midst of flux I knew my work had changed, that other narratives had found, if not the center of the world, a permanent cohesion in these unsuspecting, but not unwilling, carriers. (Any carrier, including a soft Squirrel-Hair No1 with red handle and tip dipped in tempera, and a tufty, long, thick and not tapered, synthetic full of indigo acrylic, can yield, can reproduce, if it's fertile.)

Carried with care, and unpacked, the paintings I’d completed while in America were (rightly and wrongly) seen as harbingers of change, not as change itself. I also knew, despite this, that although acquired accents don’t often last long, the thinking and the making couldn’t then, and probably wouldn’t ever, quite conform.

However I took a job, as soon as we seemed settled, teaching art at the Murwillumbah Adult Learning Center, and the following year, started a BA in Visual Art at Northern Rivers College, (now Southern Cross University) Lismore. But, still really unsettled, and only a third through the course, we moved to Canberra, and inspired by a unit completed in Art Theory: The History of Ideas, I changed to academic study in Philosophy, Comparative Religion, and Communication. Simultaneously, I continued to make paintings, and to have thoughts about paintings, that were different, again. And, a year or so later, I took another teaching job at The Canberra Art Workshop.

---

6 Berger, p. 55
7 I did not see the implications of this until now (September 2000), but this is a traveler's wry contribution to globalisation.
Paddy Plasto, ‘Reflections’ (1984), Watercolor and Egg Tempera on board (size 50x40cm)
NARRATIVE POSSIBILITY: AN INTRODUCTION TO, AND A MOVE TOWARDS, INTEGRAL CREATIVITY

ORIGINSIX (b)

It’s Canberra, 1989, and still fairly new to its artworld and looking for soulmates, I find and explore a warehouse converted to studios only a few blocks from the house I am renting. I walk the winding ill-lit hallways past, on either side, numerous closed doors with numbers and imagine that the place is empty until I hear, and trace, the sound of water filling and, subsequently, a fortuitous meeting.

“The studios,” the woman with a bucket tells me, “are small and cheap, apart from one.” “That one,” she says, pointing through a sort of foyer to a hall and an end out of view, “is a community space, big enough for workshops and classes for children and adults.”

And although I’d seen no sign of this, she also informs me, that all the individual studios are occupied. There’s one tenant, however, who wants to share.

The studio is cramped and has no window at all and although I find it impossible to work, I do go there, persistently, looking for contact. Occasionally, and particularly on the day our rent is due, I find him there too. And when, on one of these days, he suggests to me (with youthful seriousness) that if I’m up for it he’ll put my name forward at the next committee meeting as a temporary Saturday-morning replacement for him, should he be ill or whatever. I agree. It is not illness, however, but a move to sunny Queensland that gives rise to his permanent leave in June, and, it being short notice and the middle of the term, I am asked to step in. The instructions for running a community art class for children are simple according to the young man about to abandon them. He calls it ‘cheap community baby-sitting’ and before going he gives me (with youthful exuberance) simple instructions. They amount to:

- A vast variety of very cheap material
- A bit of a focus
- A bottle of cordial not red
- A handful, or two for a woman, of lollies and:
- A desire to stay for the winter.

“Just throw a few lollies at them if they get restless,” he advises, “it helps keep control.” Restless? Control! But as it’s a bit late to renege, I’m in till the end of term. There are twelve of ‘them’ aged between seven and eleven. For four weeks I barely manage to keep the thing together without throwing anything and then, after the term break coming back to the group was like coming home.

---

8 It did cross my mind then and later that he was right, it was two-and-a-half hours for $10.

PADDY PLASTO/ORIGINSIX
This is the studio of Canberra’s Community Art Workshop. It's a wide and long corner room, up two flights, with windows forming two sides and two distant views of countryside. It holds, synonymous with school terms, day and night classes in drawing and painting and, although open to members only, workshops on Tuesdays and Thursdays. All teachers must become members, and thus pay an annual fee, and pay rent for their class time according to the number of participants. On Saturday mornings, smelling of turps from the oil painting class on Friday night, it's all ours!

- There’s space.
- There’s light.
- There are free-standing, easels: now leaning.
- There are drab wooden donkeys.
- There are ten, I think, trestle bases: two sets of red and three sets of blue.
- There’s flat plywood doors (once white, now paint smeared and dusty and presently pushed edgewise, and stacked,) to span them.
- There are six rolls of paper, full and creamy and print-bare, in a corner. One roll is fitted on a paper tearing device that’s mounted on a wall, nearby.

There are drapes, draped over screens, and piles of folded others: worn lengths of laces, velvets, and cloth strips of stripes and patterns (and plains) and checks. And spots? There's a platform, for model(s), with two tall malleable heater/lights, and one huge, portable, very old, floor-sitting radiator with thick rubbery cord. And, there are boxes and baskets of things: rough rocks and smooth, long stems of Honesty, vases, bowls, shells, pine cones, and skulls. Right over there in a low padlocked cupboard, for which I've been given a key, there are cups, mugs and a jar of cheap coffee marked Monday; there are teabags (with and without) and there's amber lumps of (un)refined A1 sugar. And naturally (although water must be fetched from down the hall and the washroom basin and transported and transferred in and from the yellow bucket with spout, not the green spoutless bucket meant for dirty paintwater,) there’s an urn!

And in clusters, or sometimes in lines several deep, are stools, kitchen chairs of chrome and vinyl and a few padded chairs with arms. There’s a whole wall for works and a selection of coloured plastic and brass drawing pins. There’s a soft broom, a dustpan, a mop, another bucket, a plastic bag full of plastic bags and (though this one's scuffed by passage and ground-in charcoal,) in keeping with tradition, the floor is checkerboard tiles.

---

9 When I open a sentence with the words ‘This is…’ it is often a tribute to Tom Robbins, *Skinny Legs and All* Bantam Books, NY, 1990, who opens his novel with these words: ‘This is the room of the wolfmother wallpaper. The toadstool motel you once thought a mere folktale, a corny, obsolete, rural invention,’ and ‘this is the room where your music was invented.’ p. 1.
In Canberra, at that time, the profusion of choice had almost arrived. (By the mid-nineties many more privately run art classes for children, including the popular *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*, were operating and the number of children seeking a Community Art Program had dwindled.) In 1989, however, it was usual to have a class group of twelve or more, but reasonable to assume that only a few of these would be ongoing and really keen. For most children and parents, the art classes, though not generally thought of as baby-sitting, were not approached as long term or significant. A term, 8 weeks or nine, was a non-demanding commitment, and was often considered merely ‘having a try’. This suave attitude and its consequence, although accepted as normal by the status quo does, I think, produce anomalies in every new arena of activity that involves the possible acquisition of skill and learning, via a teacher/learner relationship, and paid for entertainment. Even when this attitude is quite out-front, and children are encouraged to ‘just have fun’, I’ve found that their parents often still anticipate that the ‘try’ will be followed by a serious consultation with the teacher and an evaluation of talent and progress. Within this approach the child, the participator, probably has other short-term but certainly significant concerns: while two and a half-hours seems a long time to the half-hearted, with or without talent, it is barely enough to the genuinely keen. Add to this a scenario in which the children who wish they were somewhere else most of this time also expect that, at least, they will be provided with enough diversion or stimulation to stave-off boredom, My own inarguable introduction (although according to the status quo, of course, I’d probably already failed my four-week test) was enough for me to experience and understand that if I was to continue, if I was to be ongoing, I would have to side step the ‘having a try’ attitude myself and do something new.

If you ask me today to explain my reasons for continuing, they’d seem well reasoned, self-motivated and altruistic:

1. I’m a mother, but my children are on the brink of adulthood.  
2. I’m a 52 years old painter facing realities: the artworld, especially in the cities, is overcrowded with aspiration. I’ve shown my work here at a few small venues, but I’m not part of the Canberra ‘Scene’. And, even if my work measures up, I’m unwilling to force myself into the competitive artworld lifestyle, into a succession of planned, rotating, regularly spaced, self-promoting and rhetorical exhibitions in sought-after galleries. Being ‘in’ means becoming known, socially and figuratively, in certain galleries in Canberra and their affiliates interstate, entering and being hung in prestigious competitions, and being reproduced in print. (This, while promoting patronage and kudos also means at least 40% commission added into a work’s price. But a mid-career artist, which I was according to my history of achievement, still could not guarantee that sales would cover material, transportation, insurance, and travel costs. The only dependable benefit, and hopefully a continual shift above it, was another line with name and date, to add to a requisite and circuitously impressive CV.)
Paddy Plasto ‘And yet relation appears’ (1989), Acrylic on paper, 55x40cm,

Paddy Plasto, ‘From Alchemy to Algeny’ (1989), Acrylic on paper 55x40 cm
Potentials

Children are greater than the grown man. All grown men have more experience, but only a few retain the greatness that was theirs before the system of compromises began in their lives. I have never respected any man more than I have some children. In the faces of children I have seen a look of wisdom and of kindness expressed with such ease and such certainty that I knew it was the expression of a whole race. Later, that child would grow into being a man or a woman and fall, as most of us do, into the business of little detail with only now and then a glimmering remembrance of lost power. These, however, are rare, but the potential exists in all children.  

A week or so before the commencement of a new term, the teachers gather in the big studio, set up tables, cover them with white paper, and sit in a long line facing the entrance door to take registrations, and payment for the coming weeks. Most of the teachers are struggling artists, and each new term brings hope for that extra bit of regular and dependable income. This art community was first established in 1948 and while it still has a base of old-timers with a penchant towards variety, there are often too few members and interested public signing up for an adult class to render it viable and, consequently, some advertised classes never get started. In spite of this the teachers, or would be teachers, most of them with independent studios within the complex, do not vie for the children's classes.

And so in 1991, when I have a little core of ongoing children and agree to do both the Saturday afternoon class and the morning, I ask the committee if I can change the rules, and simply pay a nominal rent for the community studio for the whole of Saturday regardless of how many or how few children I have, and my proposal is accepted. This means of course, that I, that we (the children and I) have freedom to change other things. The size of a class, or session, its duration, its technical, analytical, and creative focus, its expectations, and especially its inner dynamics all change during the next few years. Some of these changes are pre-conceived, some are responses, and many are reciprocal experiences that will change us.

Creative Groups

It's been considered a necessity, and one of the advantages of the education system, that (with only rare exemptions) a student achieves a certain age, and hopefully level, and (by birthday, default or feedback) is deemed, by the system, to have completed the prerequisite progress necessary and foundational to an advance to the next stage of learning: in other words students move through the system linearly and logically.

My initial experience of the community art class for children made it clear to me that it had little correlation with this system, and in what I now call ‘a creative art group’ it has even less. As I’ve explained above, children usually come to an art class because parents think their child has ‘artistic’ talent, because a friend is going to one, and/or because parent(s) and/or child have decided to foster ‘having a try’. And although age, knowledge, experience or measure of the student's talent is not often stated as a primary concern, both parent(s) and child, rightly expect that practical knowledge, technical skill, will accrue, and of course it does. But I found these ‘classes’ too volatile, too open

---

to disruption for knowledge and skill to be acquired by a method that is logically and sequentially determined: composed of an ever-changing group of approximately twelve, new and on-going, children (with varying attitudes and disparities of age). The class needs continual restructuring, and although the acquisition of skill does occur it is not possible to build momentum such as could be generated in a milieu determined by age, experience or talent.

Some children do want a formal art-class situation, and a teacher who knows the secrets of illusion and knows how to explain them and/or how to demonstrate them. Other children might want this too, but more than this they seem to share, probably without yet giving it words, a curious yearning and a natural spontaneity. Social creativity, according to Montuori, thrives in and is nourished by the development of dialogue. Dialogue may come into focus, (emerge in experience, or develop through talent) within an art class, but it seemed to me that for dialogue or creative exchange, the art class itself, in its capacity for technically sequential development, was not essential.

In a group, the scenario and the structure needs to be different: its primary concerns are participation and exchange. Specifically its focus needs to be a phenomenological participation that shares, visually and verbally, both subjective and objective stories while spontaneously and simultaneously, and almost as a subtext, developing individual skill through practice and appropriate help along with the ability and agility to improvise when necessary. Montuori’s ‘love of knowledge’ and ‘social creativity’ are close to this for it includes a love of exploring and expressing, and a love of finding and experiencing rather than always being shown or taught. We discovered, in our creative group, that through talking, listening, questioning, and working together we got to know ourselves and each other and this helped us find and create other ways of working. It also gave us ways of and words for talking about the work, and ways of sharing social, philosophical, analytical and one-on-one time, while preserving a space for solitude and individual time, with a break for snacks.

Our group differed fundamentally from the education system (from any ‘class’ system,) in its acceptance of disparate ages, talents and experiences and its unpredictable structure: students were only required to commit to the group for a term and thus could come and go, and sometimes come back again. Thinking, and feeling and acting like a group evolves through a way of thinking and making that needs commitment if it is to maintain the hesitant and confident balance that establishes it as a living entity. Technical achievement is not the goal, but it does develop. Technique is the fruit not the seed.

Individually and collectively, the children often discovered techniques and solutions in dialogue: we had inaugurated a space, usually at the start of a session, in which each individual was offered the opportunity for group consultation and inspiration by showing a work-in-progress, opening it to comment and question. One by one those who needed criticism or assistance, put the work where we all could see, and hear and, if we had an idea or suggestion, we put it forward. Each individual knew, however, that this was just one opportunity and that if they needed extra consultation they could ask for it. This method has many benefits providing dialogue takes place... not simply a
comment (invariably newcomers expect to give and get a compliment!) that a work is ‘good’ or ‘liked’. Because although technique is not imposed there will be, through continuing dialogue, a growing understanding of ideals like internal integrity: the relationship of form and space and colour within the work; the illusion of perspective, and, by a developing focus on the relationship between the content and context of a work, the importance of background and foreground. Each individual also understood that any comment, criticism, or suggestion was at first a dialogical opportunity, and, if acceptable a practical possibility.

Communication and dialogue depend on exchanging differences and similarities: through dialogue even a work that appears to be one-pointed, may encourage other responses. Dialogue, in this context, meant group inquiry into the contents, context and method of a work as well as interpretations of what the work already is/means. Dialogue may prompt further questions or give a shared understanding of what has already been done, technically and narratively and what could/should be done. Certainly, dialogue provides an opportunity for exchange but most importantly, after dialogue there is an overarching freedom that any suggestion(s) for further action(s) or interpretation(s) of the work-in-progress thus far is simply suggestion and an individuals’ next move may be to include or disregard it/them. Often, opportunities for dialogue were waiting for us! Each Saturday we entered a space that had been used by other groups throughout the previous week, and, therefore, we’d find a new lot of drawings or paintings pinned around the walls. Portraits, still-lifes, and probable and improbable nude likenesses awaited us and seemed to beg our attention. Much could be learned, and unlearned from these. Sometimes there were instructions on the blackboard, or diagrams and for me these were often a nudge: they informed me of my approach. Once, for example, we arrived to find the words: REMEMBER THAT THE BACKGROUND IS ONLY THE BACKGROUND, and this became the focus for the day. As a group we refined our criteria and attitude, and at the end of our third term together discussed the sort of thing we might do next. (Initially we simply talked about size or material, but soon the works had to have further purpose.) And although not models, the years 1992 through to 1995, were prime examples of Social Creativity, and exemplars of ‘collective’ thinking and making. Together we produced the following:

11 Hoy, says: Certainly the humanistic, historical disciplines would be in severe straits if interpretation came down to saying “this is what the text means to me.” There would then be no grounds other than personal preferences or contemporary fashions for disputing different or conflicting interpretations. p. 59.

12 Montuori explains: I sometimes lecture in public about social creativity. I typically discuss the collaborative nature of musical performance and movie-making, among other activities. I note the social, political, historical, and economic factors that helped shape the lives and achievements of writers and painters, creative persons whose work we like to think is done “alone.” I present the social constructivist argument or introduce the sociological perspective, discussing the role of “movements” in the arts, or the function of laboratories in science. In short I invite the audience to broaden its understanding of the where and when of creativity. Inevitably, some in the audience will challenge this whole perspective, asserting that “ultimately” creativity is the lone act of a single individual. “Ultimately,” in their view, none of the other “stuff” matters. This hard-core belief, which in some circles would be described as a perfect example of the workings of “ideology.” has multiple social, political, and historical roots (Montuori and Purser 1997)*. As an assumption about the nature of creativity, and about the isolated, autonomous nature of the self, is not
In 1993 we published *A Work of Art*, after working on it for a year. And also our first calendar for the year 1994: *What Shall We Do?*


The calendars produced for 1994 and 1995 were inspired by a talk given by Gerald O’Barney of The *Millennium Institute* in USA when he addressed *The Parliament of World Religions* in Chicago in 1993. I was able to attend his dissertation as my work, *The Meeting* was included in *The Sacred in Art*, an art exhibition organised as part of the Parliament. At the time I was exhausted by his address, which focused on the growing ecological and social crisis occurring globally, and almost wanted to dismiss it as another scientific message of disaster projection. I remember thinking that these statistics and projections were hopelessly based on a linear continuum. But O’Barney ended his plenary with an urgent plea for help, and I don’t think any person hearing or witnessing this plea could have remained unmoved for he spoke in sorrow and almost in despair. “What shall we do?” was not a question that begged a definitive answer. It is a question asked now, and again tomorrow. It is a fertile question that calls to mind and heart. Our immediate response will depend on the need and the opportunity of the moment.

*What Shall We Do? a creative response*, was our first calendar, and our group response to the question. When completed we sent him, as a gift, 5 copies of it, and he in turn responded by ordering, and paying cost price and postage for, 80 copies which he intended to give to senior members of the Institute for Christmas. The following year, he did the same thing for *1995 and Beyond*, and, as an acknowledgment to each of the children, he sent a copy of his book *Global 2000*, (1993), Millennium Institute, USA, with a personal comment and a few words of thanks.

*A work of Art*

The occasion, the company, the very sound of my voice, draws more from my mind than I find in it when I sound it and use it by myself.  

In 1992 we decided to make and publish a book, and when *A Work of Art* was published it was imbued with trust that the scope of a creative form really is limitless. I hope that our book is still making tracks, that it continues to unfold and to meet with those who took part in its production and a whole lot of others who ‘lit upon it’ too. If I am right, a creative work of art is an exemplar of unity while it also unifies, by being open to include ever-changing interpretation, fragments and peripheries. A creative work is not a one-way,

---

*shared by most other cultures around the globe, and even in the West it has only become prevalent in the last two hundred years or so. pp. 191/192.


14 All of our publications were reproduced with use of Canon Digital Colour Copiers and Canon Bubble Jet Printers. Some works had to be scanned and reduced up to 3 times.

one-place, one-time experience, it is the source of an ongoing communion with possibility, it is a harbinger.

Channeling energies into an exclusive task does not leave much time to renew the life-principal. The assembly-line mentality that characterizes so much art-making today causes the artist to lose that necessary contact with the flow of life, and makes his activity become mechanical…a dead formula, emptied of meaning and its original emotional impact. If creativeness lies equally at the root of artistic talent and of life experience, the most important object of production will be the human personality itself, which must be perpetually made over. The work of art, then, is merely the evidence of the individual’s self-transformation…the tracks, but not the actual animal. Build living Buddhas, says the Zen maxim, not pagodas. 16

I had never used a computer when we started work on the book but knew that the text, the works titles, the fonts and finished printed look of a page was not a task for my electric typewriter. Thus I purchased and enlisted a teacher, I thanked him in the book, who taught me the basics…not an easy task I can tell you, and only possible I would say because he was thirteen, very patient, and not so verbally quick and clever (even though I’m sure he knew how to be,) as all the other computer literate persons I knew. We agreed that every participant should accept responsibility for four pages which were to include images and text: comments on work, stories, and poems. Most work was smaller than A1 so it was not too difficult to have it reduced it to the allocated size. Sculptural work, and some large paintings had to be photographed first. We found out before long that photocopying does not reproduce an image exactly, and it was often necessary to return an image to the artist for reworking of an area that was not translating well. (Some images changed too much, usually by loosing colour or definition, but the photocopy and its recorded setting allowed us to know and adjust an original work. We also discovered that both pastel and paint could be applied onto a photocopy, but that photocopying the photocopy was risky.) Occasionally the unpredictable differences created by the machine were a bonus.

It was a slow procedure! I wanted the children to take an active part in all aspects of the book, including collating and proof reading. During the week I would do mock-ups on my computer of what the children had given me at the end of a Saturday’s work. And each Saturday the children and I modified the layout before they went to their individual contributions. We produced about 50 books and sold them for cost price.

A Work of Art is not an example of Narrative Possibility as I think of it now, but unwittingly it followed the same philosophical principals. I have included, on the following pages, two images from the book and an extract from the Foreword or Preface (which appeared in the book in tiny text and a form that resembled a suitcase), as examples of the approach then in 1992.

We started this book without knowing how to...what stared out to be a sort of shared record became something else. Creativity does not depend on rules learned, on past experience or on acquired knowledge, it occurs, when necessary, to meet the needs of the moment. In retrospect we have learned much. This book became more than just a matter of recording what had already been done. Each student recognised the importance of text and layout, and we realised, in the doing, that every page requires its own balance and integrity, and its place in the whole. As well, we were introduced to the canons of modern technology and could explore a ground where expansion and contraction were equally and simultaneously possible, where internal structure, while still a matter of adjustment and alignment, was almost fluidic. The images represent selected works done over a three-year period, with only a minimum of classification, although we hope the diversity of our explorations and question is obvious. The order of presentation is loosely based on duration of participation. The commentaries and images in this book are from all of us, and whomever and whatever inspired us. If we fail to acknowledge what seem to be appropriations, we trust that they will be accepted as in a collage; ideas and inspirations from many aspects brought together in form. Our intention has not been to simply rearrange old patterns, but to accept the possibility of a new one. This art group is not aimed at formal learning, but it is not a mindless playground. Technique is only of relative importance. Students are more aware of interrelationship, balance, and the need to question and communicate. Communication however, is not mere interpretation, for although interpretation is rarely single faceted it does require a shared set of rules, a shared symbolic order. While of course we have these on an obvious level, and while some understand the concept of oneness on a subtle level, in a mix of students from different age groups, different social backgrounds, different school systems, and with different interests, different abilities, and different memories, only the freedom to express and to inquire need be acknowledged. One parent suggested that as children are so well informed these days, their ability to comment on environmental issues, for example, is hardly surprising and probably unoriginal. This is true, but what is in question when looking for shared meaning is not so much the originality as the origin, and what is open to change. When true change is expressed there is no referent, no comparison. This may or may not be baggage.

Paddy Plasto 1993

Preface of *A Work of Art* has been marginally edited since 1993.
This is an example of Student C’s work, when she was part of the group. She is also a participant in the work on Narrative Possibility in *Originseven*. At the time of this drawing she was 11 years.
Work of Afterwords…

The technique of a little individuality will be a little technique, however scrupulously elaborated it may be. However long studied it will be a little technique; the measure of the man. The greatness of art depends absolutely on the greatness of the artist's individuality and on the same source depends the power to acquire a technique sufficient for expression. The man who is forever acquiring technique with the idea that sometime he may have something to express, will never have the technique of the thing he wishes to express. The technique learned without a purpose is a formula 19 which when used, knocks the life out of any ideas to which it is applied. 20

During my experience as a teacher, at least in the context of the Saturday ArtWorkshops for Children, I was rarely able to communicate to the parents the spirit of connectedness that developed within the group or a method used to enable each individual to find his or her creative voice. I know that our groups were safegrounds, I know that some found comfort while others found delight and still others touched something deeper and somehow profound. Although I know that many of the parents continued to ‘send their children off to Art’ because the children seemed to like it, I think that most of the children loved it. The following approaches proved helpful:

1. When I am with a new student, I ask them to draw anything they wish to. Afterwards, we talk over what they felt about the work. This usually gives me an insight into their joys or frustrations, and provides a map for exploration and exchange.

2. There are a number of ways to widen perceptions:
   - what seems like an ordinary thing in nature becomes extraordinary when it is really seen. Each tree, each leaf, has character. Each living thing has a life story.
   - still-lifes can give much help for light and shadow, balance and imbalance (within the designated space frame), and the relationship between forms.
   - landscapes are best for seeing perspective via changes in colour intensity and size.

3. I have found the human face the best meeting place for all of the above: for discovering both the outer structure and the inner potentialities. And I have found that most people, initially, tend to draw what they know not what they see. When I first ask a child to draw a face from life, I suggest that they look closely at the face of someone nearby until they feel ready to work in their drawing. In many cases, regardless of age and degree of sophistication, I find that even those able to perceive and fashion likeness draw a face that, at least in some measure, resembled their own. Their face is the most familiar of faces, probably the only face they do scrutinise.

19 Of course this is what an academically trained art educator must do, within an institution even creative works adheres to certain criteria and are judged by technical and psychological analysis: models and formulas. These same models and formulas are built on the premise that art can be either bestowed or acquired.

20 Henri, p. 122.
4. I think children, or babies when they are held, know the faces of their carers: they share and exchange with their eyes, but later it is their own face that they examine. It is not surprising, then, that children include something of themselves when asked to draw a face. What is interesting, is that although they probably know their own face in some detail they know a mirror image.

5. Young children most often draw the face with exaggerated detail: floating eyes, large separate eyelashes, fringes usually cut to the eyebrow (as if all haircuts involve a basin), various interpretations of ear size and placement and wonderful examples of ‘never likely to draw breath ever’ noses, (not to mention mouths).

6. When we are able to see the differences, in ourselves and others, (in colour and light and shadow and shape, and to add to all this the happy, sad, angry, fearful, shy, cheeky expressions and the age differences,) a world of shape and sometimes unexpected depth is first of all suggested and later become apparent.

7. And when we can place these discoveries into a relationship with space and whatever else is in or in proximity to that space, a field of perspective is ready to bloom. Then, when we see or imagine a context, a narrative, a reason: a depth, a world of possibility and inquiry is ready to open. It may be interesting to note that most faces are started by drawing an outline. I have found, in every case, that it is far easier to ‘see’ a face as a whole when the inside structure is drawn first. If the eyes are correctly spaced and the nose understood to be like a protruding mountain, the mouth, ears, hairline and eventually the outer and under formations of cheekbone and chin follow quite easily.

8. Painting and drawing differ in one important aspect: paint is more malleable and, at least in the case of acrylic or oil, can be altered while still wet or later by overlaying. But Charcoal and Pastel drawing is also very kind to those who are a little concerned about always having the line in their work ‘right’, because the charcoal or pastel under-marks often enrich a work. I try to encourage a student to throw away their eraser. I think it is helpful for drawing, as for life, if we accept that while a line already drawn can be erased, there is often no need for this. Even those lines that seem unsatisfactory can contribute to the foundation or prompt a change that, unexpectedly, enhances rather than mars a work. Charcoal and Pastel

21 Levin, The Listening Self, says:

Apart from context and function, we cannot tell whether the ‘deep self’ and the ‘body of depths’ are concepts referring to something false…the constructs and projections of an oppressive ideology. Conceptualizing the self and the body as ‘deep’ may indeed be a way of capturing them for social domination: creating a depth of which the individual is unconscious and then filling it with a content (of meanings, motives, reasons, intentions, beliefs) that conforms it to the dominant ideology and is taken, therefore, to confirm it. (Psychoanalytic explanations for social problems often function this way.) But conceptualizing the self and the body as ‘deep’ may also be a way of recognizing an irreducible individuality and protecting self and body from social domination and totalization. If, as Freud claimed, the ego forms at, and as, the surface of the libidinal body, and if this ego is a product of socialization, i.e. of social interaction, then conceptualizing the body and the self as ‘deep’ may be a way of denying their reduction to a socially imposed, socially imprinted surface; it is a way of representing their withdrawal from, and their resistance to, a surface-heing that is totally determined by the prevailing prescriptions. Let us not forget that the persona is a mask that conceals even as it reveals, and that the human face is not a surface, but rather a depth, a dimensionality, the presence of an unrepresentable alterity and a very radical ethical demand for recognition. pp. 99/100.
develop a lines’ fluidic nature; pencil, at least for a beginner and unless it's a good soft graphite, is often static.

9. The aspect of charcoal which deters some children and adults is its ‘dirtiness’, the residue picked up on fingers or hand that gets transferred because all attention goes towards making the marks, but if these traces can be made welcome on the crisp white paper and the soft pink fingers, and one doesn't have to resort to tissues wrapped around the charcoal stick or a mahlstick, a new freedom can emerge.

10. Many of the children these days are drawing cartoons, it is quite difficult for them to gain the confidence to abandon the character most in vogue, especially when all they really want to do is draw who/whatever better than the other kids can!

11. Sometimes painting with brush moves a child to new discoveries. Sometimes I need to show a child the wonderful things a brush can do, and what certain brushes can do. Sometimes talking is important.

12. Sometimes it’s fitting to read aloud. Sometimes the room is quiet, except for the sound of drawing or the occasional swirl of brush through water.

13. Giving children good materials to work with is important. Nearly every student has had some experience in painting and drawing, and it's nearly always been with the cheapest material available. They quickly learn to respect the difference, and they use the materials economically.

14. Ongoing projects work best when they unfold without an absolute time frame:

- Most children bring a way of working that is unique, but each project can become a means of finding out more of what this might be.

- Often children are approaching a work with an untried medium and its fun to drop a project for a week or two to simply play with the new technology.

- It changes the attitude that goes with the idea of children going home each week with a pile of things completed to an understanding that sometimes volume masks as and hides significance.

Keeping a balance between learning how to see, how to interpret what is seen and how to depict what has been seen and interpreted is important, I think. And this includes the seeing, the meaning-making and the rendering of those aspects which are not identifiable in solid terms: imaginings, ideas, and emotions can, of course, be experienced, and they are, like texture, palpable and able to be expressed. And, for a teacher, keeping the balance between showing and telling and waiting for a child to ask or discover is crucial and sometimes excruciating.

---

22 A mahlstick is a stick held in one hand to support the wrist of the drawing or painting hand to prevent the smudging of the work.
The years 1992/1994 were also busy for me in other ways. I had also taken time away from academic studies and I was painting, and conscious of the continuing changes in my own work when I was accepted as an exhibiting artist in The Sacred in Art. This exhibition was presented by The Council for A Parliament of the World’s Religions, and held in conjunction with the Parliament, at The Palmer House Hilton in Chicago in late August and early September 1993.

23 This painting is not entirely an example of Narrative Possibility, I did have an idea of the form I wanted to make. I have included it here to show the difference in my own work between a Narrative Possibility image and a preconceived image.
Meetings, and the Sacred in Art

When I began to paint *The Meeting* I entertained the notion that the twenty-two artists showing their work would represent many of the cultures taking part in the Parliament. I anticipated an exhibition that would give an overview, replete with similarities and differences, of Spiritual expression. More than the verbal, and textual presentations the Parliament had organised, I thought the ‘all-at-once’ perception of these images would be an Integral experience. But this was an assumption on my part, and far from the case. Although several of the exhibitors were from other cultures, including Sri Chinmoy and Ma Jaya, twenty-one of these lived and worked in America. I was the only artist from overseas, and although the images were diverse they were contemporary and, paradoxically, Postmodern. Meetings are unpredictable!

The exhibition curator, Salvator Conti, included the following statement in a handout *Realizing the Sacred in Art*. The handout explained that:

> The universe is a balance of reciprocal forces. Artists will speak of spontaneous experiences that link creative energy that feels as if it came from external force. Symbolist painters in the late 1800’s worked with external forces with color, line. Geometric symbols, the elements of the Earth, and the duality that abounds. They united opposites: male/female, dark/light, spirit/matter and Heaven/Earth. They worked at visually demonstrating energy in their paintings. In the late 1800’s artists such as Mondrian, Kandinsky and Malevich were well versed in such ancient and sacred mythologies, and incorporated this knowledge in their work. The Arts and Sciences began to travel the same path. 24

While I was working on the paintings I knew that my approach was not one well-versed in ancient and sacred mythologies and yet, albeit naively idealistic, I knew that the work no longer looked naive. Not only was the content of my work changing, the technical application and my use of color was also different. For years I had worked in multi-hued watercolours and although I still loved the unexpected images that emerge when watery pigments meet, in 1993 I was working and overworking exclusively with gesso and acrylic, and two predominate colours: indigo and brown madder. This combination, I’d discovered, engendered an ongoing process in which each subsequent layer brought to visibility forms and interrelationships which were composed by the already manifested layer meeting with the new. This was not a radical shift, it was still working without a predetermined image, but now other things were happening! Not only did images appear and disappear, not only were they able to be, depending on the mix, both transparent and opaque, they were now nearly always stories which, in one sense, fulfilled a need. While the exploration still began with a chaotic wash, with intermingling pigment and the finding and discerning of form(s), interrelationship and context, it could also begin with an inquiry, a guideline that seemed to prompt the appropriate content of a work. And although the story told in this manner is a matter of continual wonder it is also, I’d realised, a matter of trust.

It is difficult to share the wonder of this working with this method, perhaps because the material changes can never be anticipated and explanations, then, also become fugitive:

---

it’s like showing and telling and finding and interpreting a changing story at the same time. And rather than an already named goal it is a story that has taken form through action that is both disciplined and free. It is particularly difficult to explain the process and the discipline required to participate and partake in story making (the necessity of maintaining internal integrity, the ability to be open to change and the commitment needed to participate in the unfolding, rather than the repetition, of a story) to those who think that creative, and of course technical, prowess may be achieved only by steps which follow a plan that aims toward a particular end result. In general, as David Bohm explains, a new story does not evolve through habitual practice, but by perceiving in a new way:

One can then “feel out” and explore what is unknown, rather than go on, as has generally been ones habit, with mere variations on old themes, leading to modifications, extensions, or other developments within the framework of what has already been known, either in one's own field, or in a closely related form in some other field. Thus, one’s work can begin to be really creative, not only in the sense that it will contain genuinely original features, but also in that these will cohere with what is being continued from the past to form one harmonious, living, evolving totality.  

Gaining prior proficiency in line or brush is not, then, an absolute necessity, technical achievement is however, while not beholden to this as a desired end or purpose, a fruit of the work. As Bohm points out, ‘certain kinds of things can be achieved by techniques and formulae, but originality and creativity are not among these. The act of seeing this deeply (and not merely verbally or intellectually) is also the act in which originality and creativity can be born’. The accumulation of skill, the craft of art, demands careful adherence to the preconceived: to the form and the substance of the story already told, and gaining proficiency is considered essential to its physical replication. What I am suggesting is different, it is intentional action taken without plan and sometimes without prior knowledge. It is, however, structured and systematic, and while it can be a means of accessing and researching and finding concrete forms of expression, it is also imaginative play playing in a myriad of possible plays and it brings a story to life.

I had no need, at the time of painting, to record, in words, the urge that prompted The Meeting. I wasn’t questioning the works meanings, or wondering how and from where they materialized, I just painted with the discipline of Narrative Possibility. I’m just as sure, however, that my private studies: Wilber’s early works including Eye to Eye (1983), David Bohm’s Changing Consciousness (1991) and Terry Sands’s new approach to decision-making, were influential and that they contributed an aspect of ‘meeting’ to the works.

Meeting with David Bohm

In 1992 I was to attend a course at Schumacher College, in Devon, UK on David Bohm’s Dialogue proposal, but he became ill, and was unable to be present. I did, however, participate in the group meeting or Dialogue according to the guidelines of his proposal,

---

and I continue to be interested in the proposition that the process of human thought, particularly in Western societies, is defective. Dialogue, as Bohm proposes it, offers the possibility of a coherent culture of shared meaning emerging within a group. This coherence ‘existed in the past for human communities before technology began to mediate our experience of the living world’ 27 and Bohm is convinced that the deep causes underlying the ‘environmental, social and cultural crisis’ 28 threatening our civilizations are related to the present processes of communication between individuals, nations and even different parts of the same organization. 29 Accordingly:

…an immense and ever accelerating technological development has in principal brought about enormous new possibilities for a creative and happy life. But at the same time this development is threatening our civilization, and indeed, perhaps the human race and our planet itself, with almost total destruction. 30

The outward manifestations of progress, pollution, war, economic polarisation, as well as the benefits of civilization, are, Bohm makes clear, all products of human thought, but thought, especially in its propensity to divide and fragmentise, builds and destroys by a process of abstraction. Abstraction creates a background and foreground, separates something from its context, and, a hierarchy of abstraction, enables us to reason:

By abstracting you do two things: first of all, you leave out the vast complexity that you can't handle, and secondly, you begin to put some order into it, a logically coherent order, which enables you to reason. The word reason is based on the Latin ratio. This can be numerical ratio, as with numbers, like three over four. But a ratio can also be used qualitatively: as \( A \) is related to \( B \), so \( C \) is related to \( D \). For example, as two things are related in thought, they are related in reality. Using abstract ratio, or reason, you can start from some fact and come to a conclusion. 31

Rational thought and knowledge largely consist of, and are conditioned and biased by, previous thought, but the tendency to produce conflict also comes from the way thought has developed over the whole period of civilization. 32 Dialogue, as Bohm proposes it, is not a discussion. Discussion, like thought, breaks things up and analyses. In the real sense of the word, “dialogue” means that meaning is “flowing through”. It is a method of both exploring the process of thought, and reaching common understanding, but it ‘is not concerned with deliberately trying to alter or change behavior nor to get the participants to move towards a predetermined goal’. 33

Bohm claims that the process of dialogue itself is not new, and a notion of its significance can be found in reports of hunter-gather meetings in which a group (twenty to forty people) met to talk together without any predetermined purpose or apparent agenda. Such gatherings seemed to ‘provide and reinforce a kind of cohesive bond or fellowship that allowed its participants to know what is required of them without the

28 Bohm, Changing Consciousness, p. ix.
30 Bohm, Changing Consciousness, p. ix.
31 Bohm, Changing Consciousness, p. 37.
32 Bohm, Changing Consciousness, p. 3.
need for instruction or much further verbal interchange. However, he proposes an approach to dialogue that also requires an awareness and commitment to the process:

The basic idea of this dialogue is to be able to talk while suspending your opinions, holding them up in front of you, while neither suppressing them nor insisting upon them. Not trying to convince, but simply to understand. The first thing is that we must perceive all the meanings of everybody together, without having to make any decisions or saying who’s right and who’s wrong. It is more important that we all see the same thing. That will create a new frame of mind in which there is a common consciousness. It is a kind of implicate order, where each one enfolds the whole consciousness. With the common consciousness we then have something knew…a new kind of intelligence.

Meeting with Terry Sands

Terry Sands came to Mullumbimby in 1983 to share some of his ideas and experiences with a group of us interested and committed to the possibility of a change of consciousness. Like Bohm his message stresses the need for individual and collective change. Changes in lifestyle, thoughtstyle, relationship, and attitude, are however, 'preliminary to the creative implementation' of what he suggests is an inevitable change of consciousness. He explained our present consciousness as having an ‘intricate and complex system of mentation, a method of thinking and making decisions, which has grown and developed individually and in the collective consciousness of most of the tribes which now inhabit the planet’. The present system, according to Sands:

…attempts to anticipate present and future events, usually in reference to past events, and to plan the reactions which one will put forth to meet those events. Such plans are further usually made in reference in past strategies. It is seen then that this complex mentation is not an objective pure, creative system, but is in fact crystallized and reactive in nature.

Sands is insistent that in order to dismantle this now obsolete system we must approach the possibility of a new way which relies on creative action. Creative action will alleviate present needs if it is a move prompted by intuitive knowing rather than by logical purpose. In the course of human development, he says, the reasoning process began when the manner and place in which a need was met the last time it arose was recalled and this enabled one to act with some sort of certainty.

I worked on The Meeting (see following page) with no certainty of what I would find, it is a Narrative Possibility:

35 Bohm, On Creativity, p. 118.
37 Sands, Towards a Change of Consciousness, p. 5.
38 Sands, Towards a Change of Consciousness, p. 3.
Paddy Plasto, ‘The Meeting’ (1992/3), seven panels 30x30cm, Acrylic on canvas

**THE MEETING**

In the Spirit of Meeting these individual works are one.  
In the Spirit of Meeting, differences and similarities may be freely expressed.  
In the Spirit of Meeting, each may partake of and take part in the event.  
In the Spirit of Meeting, a particular pathway to meeting is not absolutely predetermined.  
In the Spirit of Meeting, inner need and outer act come together.  
In the Spirit of Meeting, the illusion of separateness may be dissolved.  
In the Spirit of Meeting, creation occurs.  
In the Spirit of Meeting, new experiences and new meanings may be shared.  

We need a culture of Wholeness  
The quality of Wholeness is imperceptible. But it can be experienced.  
To meet with is to light upon.  

---

ORIGINSIX (e)

The Transition

After our fourth publication in 1995 the community art groups dispersed but the years spent with them have continued to inspire me. Participating in the evolving world of children's images, and keeping up the children as their needs constantly changed had developed my ability and vigilance. I'd discovered that as well as making statements about the world around them, children need to tell and show the story of their own evolution and to share these events in creative exchange, and in light of this I understood that my part in the whole and my primary purpose, was to offer encouragement and occasional aid to bring to life their storytelling.

Working with children was unlike my experience with the Adult Learning Center in Murrwillumbah, and this meant that my own approach and its method, Narrative Possibility, was not the children's main focus of articulation. Working with children became possible when I realised, that rather than being able to rely on what I knew and to teach my way of storytelling, it was essential to approach teaching as if it were a canvas. 

This transposition was comforting and daunting, but when the community canvas was complete and I considered working with individual children, I knew that the new canvas would present different stories. In the context of the group, although each participant expressed individuality, at least to some extent expression became an homogenised experience. It is shared ground. Exploring creativity with individuals was bound to be different.

I was worried, at first, because I thought that sharing my own little studio would involve much more than a change, of space and place and pace. But when I started to work with individual students I found it easy to share, and to open our communication by sharing, my familiarities. I knew where, and when, a dangling crystal would reflect scores of radiant rainbow circles, and I was happy to arrange a performance. I knew the colour of the bloom on every visible, and those around the corner, budding rose bush, and I was near bursting with anticipation. I'd heard and been startled by, the windows' stentorian trembling, and I knew that the sound coincided with a truck passing by, not a small earthquake. And I found it inspirational to be surrounded by images, some of them my

---

Footnote:

40 Years before, at the Adult Learning Center in Murrwillumbah, NSW. I had shared my method of painting a story instigated through water colour wash and found form. For adults able to work with it, Narrative Possibility is a method that encourages both spontaneity and the timelessness of myth, but a method that nevertheless works within the auspices of already acquired mental processes. Some people show interest in this method because they are curious, I think, to find their stories and although they are not necessarily looking for the acquisition of craft, the ability to solve problems or even the agility to think, and do, laterally, and they often inadvertently find the experience therapeutic. But Narrative Possibility it is not a method suitable to all: to find a story in a chaos of colour requires some degree of introspection, and the patience and discernment to find the suggestion of form and its connections and interconnections with other forms. It is a method that also necessitates finding value in balance, and the integrity to identify a communicable order, because as well as the benefits of discovery, a story is a tool of communication.
own, that had the presence to inspire. And whenever more inspiration seemed necessary there were my books to reach for.

But I was also a bit concerned about the new context of time-sharing: now we would have an hour and a half available for exchange, and it was to be after-school, not Saturday morning time. But time was fine. And space? Well, space was very different,

**Individual SPACE SPACE Space space**

A space is something that has been made room for, something that is cleared and free, namely, within a boundary, Greek, peras. A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something begins its presencing…space is in essence…that which is let into its bounds.  

…but modern man must first and above all found his way back into the full breadth of the space proper to his essence. The essential space of man’s essential being receives the dimension that unites it to something beyond itself…solely from out of the conjoining relation that is the way in which the safekeeping of Being itself is given to belong to the essence of man as the one who is needed and used by Being. Unless man first establishes himself beforehand in the space proper to his essence and there takes up his dwelling, he will not be capable of anything essential within the destining now holding sway.

If we flatten an object, we reduce its dimensions from three to two. But this is a flattening that takes place within space and depends on space reaming as it is. To flatten space as such would be entirely different. Here is one way to think about it: In a flattened space, each point in space would be flattened, so that it no longer supported extension in the dimensions of height or depth or width. Since standard geometry defines a point as occupying zero dimensions, we might say that such a flattened point would become less than zero, or ‘zeroless’….A zeroless world would offer neither blockage, restrictions, nor borders. In the interacting of appearance, there would be no occupancy or position, and hence no interruption. There would be no point at the center and no point that encompasses the whole; no structure that would support such distinctions as ‘center’ and ‘periphery’. There would be no properties to be owned and no structures founded by ownership.

In space that has been restored to wholeness, forms appear but they do not take birth; they exhibit but do not take up the condition they portray….Appearance shares in the ‘no identity’ of space, ‘taking form’ without a body, accepting what is given….If this way of being seems beyond our present capabilities, it is because of the confinements imposed by our ways of knowing, which sever our connection with the boundless capacities of space. Awakening to space inaccessibility, we see our task before us: to bring space forward, to allow it appear, so that it can offer its abundance freely.

---


AT HOME: the Strategic-Studio-Space

This is the room reserved for telling and showing. Because they are without drapes or blinds the long windows, showing east, showing west, seem to extend the small room. Under, and against, the south facing windowsill, and intending lengthwise into the centre of floorspace, a two-leafed oval cedar table, sacrilegiously blackened and waiting pledged restoration, provides a magnanimous working arena. The three pink directors’ chairs, although strategically placed, are awkwardly low and cushioned, and below the other window there’s an untidy bench: a door on an old doorless cupboard. Along one of the two solid walls there’s a waist-high set of shelves, dusty and black and wider and deeper than a bookshelf, offering a cluttered display of material things. And the easel? Here it stands at the end of a created corridor, a dependable structure and for an advocate of dance (rather than stance) a clearly defined and immediate space for first, last, and on the spot steps. It’s a great place for painters, especially when the paintings have dimensional fit, for then the easel can stand in constructed freedom: the table to its right and the second solid wall to its left. And also from here, a painter can dance backwards (back through the created corridor, back through the doorway, back past the spare room, the bathroom, the study and back into the living room, to view the work, and participate in it from a distance,) and forwards.

A B C D E F G H and I

All of the Narrative Possibility examples which will be the focus of Originseven were painted in my studio at home. The individual students involved in the following presentations agreed to participate, to contribute a layer to this exploration, by completing work using the process of Narrative Possibility, and allowing the work to be recorded during the process. These works do not begin from an idea and proceed to materialisation, idea into image: they do not follow a pre-imaged, pre-determined purpose to recreate, they are works that proceed directly from found or suggested form to materialised images and their interrelationship.

The students (A, C and D) were also in the community groups and had some experience of this method, and I am introducing them simply by showing their work. Students (B, E, F, and G and H) have different impute: E’s is the eldest and had already worked extensively with Narrative Possibility. B, on the other hand, had only been working with me for a year. He was thirteen/fourteen when he completed the images presented, and they are his first works using the method of Narrative Possibility. All of the students working with Narrative Possibility, and whose work was recorded in transit, were aged between twelve and seventeen years at the time, with the exception of E, who was eighteen/nineteen. In every case the student was surprised and pleased by the completed painting, and every student agreed that it would have been impossible to envisage the work and to have planned its unfolding. All works inadvertently demonstrate the student’s technical ability. To show comparisons of their work when not using Narrative Possibility, I have also included examples of other work by students A, B, and C.
The focus of this research on the work of children and teenagers was natural for me, it was my work with children that first aroused my curiosity, and alerted me to the influences that impinged on their creative expression. But Narrative Possibility is a method for any age, and I have worked extensively with adults. Student H is an adult male, and I have included two of his completed works in *Origineven*. Students F and G are six and eight respectively and I present an example of their work in *Origineight*. 
A brief introduction

I began to paint, more than forty years ago, and although I’d had no professional training this was not a deterrent to the inherent need I had to make images. My dilemma was ‘what’ to paint, not ‘how to’ do it, so I simply took a brush, filled it with pigment, and began to apply it to paper. Not only did I delight in the forms found through washes of paint, but also both the forms and the process of finding imbued me with an intense curiosity. My need to know was not specifically directed to the forms found or to their symbolic or mythical meaning, however. Rather, it was aligned in a knowledge that there was more, a sub text, a story beyond the forms I could see, experience and explain and that whatever this other story was, it was somehow ameliorated in and by this method of painting.

Narrative Possibility, as I subsequently named the process, is certainly more than meets the external eye and, therefore, there is much more to it than simply finding form. I had realised, even when working on my early paintings, the importance of balance or ‘internal integrity’, but I did not regard the works as a method and discipline that had ‘fit’ with the several philosophical and theosophical ideas I had already encountered and found inspirational. It was years later, in 1985, when I first introduced this method to others, and needed to explain ‘how to’ (an irony that did not go unnoticed) that I began to respect the value and the integrating potential of Narrative Possibility. It was not the content of the image, then, that resonated with my other studies, again it was the unfolding process.

The following images, from a student of Adult Learning in Murwillumbah, NSW, were painted in 1985. This student is male and, at that time, in his late thirties. Like most that seriously follow the guidelines, he was surprised by the work. By the end of my tenure with these adults I understood Narrative Possibility to be a method and a process that gives everyone, to the extent of their participation, access to a form of expression that is in some sense fulfilling, and sometimes life changing.
**Originseven** is focused on Narrative Possibility, and primarily it is a presentation of the work from students who played a specific part in this research by employing the method of Narrative Possibility. It is also a documentation of their work, including its historical development.

Initially my research was an exploration that looked at Narrative Possibility as a philosophy and practice. Within this discipline it is creative product, an integrating process, an event of significance and a state of mind and attitude balanced by the stillness of contemplation, the immediacy of spontaneity, and the necessity of integrity and appropriate fit. But I have also approached the research itself as a Narrative Possibility and I have found, in the course of ‘looking for more’ a possible connection not considered when this exploration began. Thus, the aspects of this work concerned with Gebser’s approach to Integral Consciousness, and the potentiality that Narrative Possibility employs, makes concrete and integrates all structures of consciousness: archaic, magic, mythic, and mental, has become, in the unfolding of my research, a most important aspect of my inquiry.

Narrative Possibility is layered, but as it is the process of unfolding and the discernment and selection of forms that has been my focus with students, I have not given any interpretations of their works' inner meaning (the emotional aspect of the magical or symbolic content of the mythical,) during or at the end of the process. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the completed images have a similar essence. This similarity has also aroused my curiosity, and prompted me to question the process of creative manifestation. The images worked as Narrative Possibilities *are* also similar in essence to my own work, and while it is true that some students have seen my work and may have been influenced by it, others have not. Most students produce very different work when not following the Narrative Possibility process, for example the works below may be compared to the images (the Narrative Possibility works recorded for my research) on pp. 188-200.

![Image: Student A. 2001, Charcoal on paper, A3](image)
Although my research is focused on the integrating potential of Narrative Possibility I suspect that the following images offer possibilities for many theoretical approaches particularly from fields of psychology which rely on reading the content of a completed work rather than taking the process of making it into consideration. My research presents the visual documentation of the process of Narrative Possibility, gives an insight into the methods employed and looks at Narrative Possibility and Integral Art; Integral Consciousness, and Creativity.

Narrative Possibility: Creativity, Philosophy, and Research Process

When I began to record and explore the evolution of a work I thought it might be possible to identify creativity as process, event and a state of openness in and through which a narrative acquires and changes form. With the knowledge and co-operation of the students involved, I decided to record these images at the end of each week's painting session knowing that the images would go through many changes and that scanning the images as they changed might reveal something I did not know about the nature of creativity. I was intending to explore, by perusing the visual changes, the journey as it unfolded from first marks to last, but I also dared to hope that I would be able to find and identify a creative mark, a creative moment, a creative event. And I assumed that this would be, if it was creative, a moment of revelation: of seeing into, and seeing other; a moment of letting go, of discerning necessity; a moment of choice without rational justification; a spontaneous action; a meeting; a transaction between forms and, therefore, a transformation of form.
The serial images, and their evolution, were not pre-conceived: they are examples of Narrative Possibility. Although Narrative Possibility is a process of image making which proceeds gradually and immediately with both simultaneous construction and deconstruction of form and space, it nevertheless reaches a stage of creation when (after core selections and the maintenance of internal balance or appropriate fit,) the work is informed by interrelationship and context in which many narratives offer potential meaning. Narrative Possibilities appear complete when all aspects of a story appear to cohere, where all aspects fit as if telling their stories together, and yet there is no synthesis. Paradoxically, the story remains balanced both within a point of becoming and, as if in an acknowledgment of continuous potential, a suspended state of promise which invites interpretation.

Within the process of Narrative Possibility, of course, discerning and/or discovering often involves the overworking of already emerging or existing forms or stories and I did question, at one time, whether this selective process was negative, a metaphor for the power to choose what lives or dies, not a method of creative possibility. But, although this process is a metaphor for a temporal view, the images are overworked and made manifest by choices that are not goal or teleologically orientated and though some forms cease to be visible (either in part or in totality) they continue to form and strengthen the foundation of the work as each layer changes. Choices made are not simply a matter of preference, they are discerned and determined by a constant awareness of the need to balance and the maintenance of internal integrity.

Regardless of the representations, metaphors, and symbols, and what they seem to say or cannot say, in a work of Narrative Possibility the seemingly completed images are potential stories, time-free stories, and as such they are not ‘about’ a view of reality, they are an integrated view of conscious unfolding.

Scanning and Layering

Recording the process of Narrative Possibility was an attempt to map the creative process, but this process was only one aspect of creativity, the others being: state (my own experience as a painter gave this aspect credence); event (I understood this to mean a transition from one state to another state), and, of course, product. Therefore:

- I began scanning with the knowledge that the method I intended to employ in recording would show many of the changes that take place in a work of Narrative Possibility but not all. But my decision to wait until the end of a painting session to chronicle a work was based on the certainty that other methods (taking photographs or videotaping during the painting session) would be intrusive.

---

1 Rifkin, ends his book *Algeny*, with these warnings: ‘If we experience life as an obstacle to overcome, then we will be relentless in our search for ways to defeat its most essential attribute, its temporal nature, its limited duration,’ and ‘What lives forever is the potential we left behind, the great possibilities we chose not to squander.’ p. 255.

Gebser, *The Ever-Present Origin*, also says, in reference to the deficient form of rational consciousness: To the thinking person, the past exists only to the extent that he can measure it or fix its outlines with dates. As for himself, he one-sidedly sets his sights on the future, particularly as he thinks…from his anthropomorphic attitude…that he can shape this temporal sector at will, as if it were dependent on him. p. 85.
I ruled out taking notes or attempting to tell the story as it unfolded because in both a written or verbal accompaniment the interpretation would have been mine and I wanted to present a visual record rather than a commentary.

I ruled out asking the students for a verbal or written commentary as I assumed that a verbal commentary would restrict spontaneity and a written one would rely on analytical memory.

I imagined that recording an image at the end of a session could show incremental changes up to the point of near completion, but I also imagined that as each reworking brought the work to a new layer of possibility, it might also be possible to find and identify the source of possibilities: origin and latency. However as I became involved in the scanning I began to suspect that I might not find a decisive moment, or pinpoint an event, a record of when and how the work changed, really changed. I did become increasingly confident though, that I would find, that I would record, many instances in which the direction of the work shifted while retaining a certain indefinable essence.

I was aware of the inherent contradictions in the process I was employing and the process I was exploring, aware that the images presented are technological representations and interpretation of change frozen in time; that creativity could not be mapped but also aware that the process is alive with potentiality.

I also realised, while recording, that even if creativity could be defined by or identified as an event, a further manifestation of origin through meeting, and a point of transformation, this would be perspectivist view and would reduce creativity, and its process, to an object rather than a continuing story.

Some aspects of the images are sequential, some are spontaneous.

---


SG: So it’s really a matter of tapping into the collective unconscious and its store of images and then finding a way to bring them forward with new meaning for our time.

TM: I would never use that language, but yes. That’s a structural way of looking at what’s going on. I would rather say that there’s a great profundity of what creates our human life, and what invites us into the various dimensions of our lives...toward pain, or happiness, or love, or death. All these things that we’ve invited into our lives are beyond us. I don’t like to talk about it as collective unconscious, though; that’s too defined.

SG: Would you say that by beyond us, these things also lure us towards them?

TM: They lure us towards our own fulfillment, and, in a way, toward who we are going to be. That’s what I had in mind when I quoted Picasso in *Care of the Soul*, when he says that if he were to connect the dots of all the events of his life, then he would draw a minotaur. It’s a nice image to think about. Our lives are fashioned, not by our intentions, but by responding to these invitations that come from fate, and from other people and events, mysteriously. And I think that what art can do that reason cannot do is provide us with images that help us contemplate these mysteries. p. 409. See T Moore, *Care of the Soul*, Harper Collins, NY,1992.
The (Narrative Possibility) Images

... originality and creativity begin to emerge, not as something that is the result of an effort to achieve a planned and formulated goal, but rather as a by-product of a mind that is coming to a more normal order of operation. And this is the only way in which originality and creativity can possibly arise, since any effort to reach them through some planned set of actions or exercises is a denial of the very nature of what one hopes to achieve. ³

...for thousands of years people have been led to believe that anything and everything can be obtained if only one has the right techniques and methods. What is needed is to be aware of the ease with which the mind slips comfortably back into this age-old pattern. Certain kinds of things can be achieved by techniques and formulae, but originality and creativity are not among these. The act of seeing this deeply (and not merely verbally or intellectually) is also the act in which originality and creativity can be born. ⁴

In the recorded sequential images, the method employed has traced the evolution of a work by presenting it as a journey in which balance and interrelationship have honed the focus of emergent possibilities. These possibilities have, in turn, met with and actualized the background, foreground, and the depth. Without necessarily providing an exact history of these events as they unfolded, the method has created a context in which change is apparent. However, although each work is a record of change: changes visible and identifiable at the time of recording, I cannot be certain that moments of spontaneous action can be pinpointed.

I present the following images as representations of the discipline and the freedom necessary to keep and create balance in an evolving story: an attitude and application that requires Verstand and Vernunft.

Method and practice:

A wash of thinned acrylic paint is applied to a gessoed paper or canvas. Paint is thinned to allow colours to merge chaotically, however, when paint has dried, suggestions of form may be found in outlines of created overlaps and degrees of colour intensity.

Wash is studied from all aspects, and first forms found are partly brought to the fore. Although some detail may be applied at this stage, it is preferable to hold back on detail as extensive work or concentration on these first found forms can inhibit other findings, and thus determine the course of a narrative possibility too soon. Rendering a form to exacting detail at this stage can also pose difficulties to the process of layering by an attachment which initiates an avoidance to change. In the process of layering a form may change, expand, reduce or be painted over, and its relation to other form(s) may also demand purposeful alteration or overworking.

After subsequent coats of pigment or gesso are applied to all or parts of the original wash, new forms emerge and connections and context(s) are found and delineated. But

---

⁴ Bohm, On Creativity, p. 26
as each form brought to the fore changes the internal balance of the whole, the work must be balanced between spontaneous action and action deemed necessary after forms are studied and assessed for integrity and appropriate fit. This balance is essential throughout the work’s evolution.

As the work develops, and connection, context(s), and interconnections become established, thicker pigments and details are applied. At this point both research into features and components of form may be necessary, and too, other forms needed to clarify context may be considered and included.
Narrative Possibility: Painting
Painting Two

image one

image two

image three

image four

image five

image six

image seven

image eight
Other Paintings:
Narrative Possibilities
Acrylic on canvas, A3
Acrylic on canvas, A3

image one

image two

image three

image four

image five

image six
Other completed paintings:
Acrylic an canvas, A3

image one

image three

image two

image four
Completed Paintings:
Narrative Possibilities

Acrylic on canvas, A4

Paper and Acrylic on synthetic plate, 20cm diameter

Acrylic on canvas, A3
Acrylic on canvas

image one

image two

image three

image four

image five

image six
Narrative Possibility and Integral Art

Narrative Possibility is an approach to painting and a method of expression that has, over a period of twenty years, become increasingly significant for me. Narrative Possibilities are stories made and told as they are unfolded. Unfolding, in this context, is an intentional action and a commitment to an attitude of openness and change. Changes in context and manifestation are evolutionary, they proceed from possibilities discerned, formed and acted upon over time, and they are events of significance that occur in the moment. Events occur in all aspects of Narrative Possibility, in the interrelationships and appropriate fit of whatever is found, met with, and represented; in images collected from the objective world, and recollected from the subjective; and in the juxtapositions of foreground and background. Changes in context and manifestation are also determined by a constant awareness of the need to maintain balance, and by the instant and considered evaluation of balance as it is influenced by each change in external form and expression. In their evolutionary capacity, Narrative Possibilities are potentials within layers unfolded into manifestation by progressive and spontaneous movement and contemplative interludes, they are also active and appropriate responses to present findings rather than reactions to, adaptation of, or identifications with past stories: experiences, habits, memories or expressions. Narrative Possibilities are not necessarily ‘works of art’.

Narrative Possibilities are interconnected narratives within an overarching narrative. An aspect of story remains in focus so long as a context remains exactly the same, however every mark affects the previous status by losing, maintaining, regaining and changing the balance or internal integrity of a story, so that the context also changes significantly when the story develops detail. Through the method of layering, and the transparency that it ensues, Narrative Possibilities bring forward images that evolve through the interplay of all layers, both foundational and transitional. Narrative Possibilities are stories that express the interplay of ‘ways of knowing’. By making concrete previous and present ways of knowing, they are disciplined and necessary steps towards the potential manifestation of Integrality, and the assimilation and expression of a new reality. Narrative Possibilities are stories yet to be told. Narrative Possibilities are not examples or anticipations of a new vision of reality, and their purpose is not, as Shlain puts it, to illuminate, imitate, interpret and in addition…create a language of symbols for which there are yet to be words:

Just as Sigmund Freud in his Civilization and Its Discontents compared the progress of a civilization’s entire people to the development of a single individual, I propose that the radical innovations of art embody the preverbal stages of new concepts that will eventually change a civilization. Whether for an infant or a society on the verge of change, a new way to think about reality begins with the assimilation of unfamiliar images. This collation leads to abstract ideas that only later give rise to a descriptive language. 5

Narrative Possibilities are not descriptions of a new reality, they are a process of integral manifestation. They are not a method of communication that is an articulation of predetermined concepts, they are a new method of experiencing and articulating the

process of integration. Narrative Possibilities do not abandon rationality, or deny or transcend a hierarchical sequence, they give ‘ways of knowing’ recognisable form, and they do this through images that, although familiar, are expressive rather than rational representations. The works identified and classified as examples of Integral Art by Gebser, revolutionary art by Shlain and transcendental art by Wilber are not necessarily Narrative Possibilities, they are predominantly works that are examples of experiences, visions or ideas re-articulated through technically commanded and executed images, and in this aspect they seek to express the original inspiration.

Respectively, Gebser recognised a dramatic shift from three dimensional depiction to four in Picasso’s work (and other Cubists and Modernist painters) whose work supersedes three dimensions by the expression of time-freedom, 6 and the suppression of dualism and perspectival rigidity. 7 Shlain gives the installation work of Lucas Samaras (see p. 142) as example of a revolutionary art that 8 heralds a major change in a civilization’s worldview 9 and Wilber lauds the beautiful transcendental works of Alex Grey.

ALEX GREY, 1953…
According to Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia: Alex Grey’s paintings:

…can be described as an unusual contemporary blend of sacred art and postmodern art. His work often depicts aspects of the supernatural world overlayed with aspects of the natural world. Some viewers report elevated or spiritual states induced while viewing…which, in the tradition, is the purpose of sacred art. His work has an eclecticism that often integrates auras, human anatomy, religious icons (sometimes reminiscent of thankas), geometric shapes and tessellations (sometimes reminiscent of mandalas), in natural, industrial, and sexual situations. 9


Alex Grey might be the most significant artist alive. In a world gone postmodern, bereft of meaning and value, cut loose on a sea of irony and indifference, Alex is taking a stunning stand: there is a God, there is Spirit, there is a transcendental Ground and Goal, of human development and unfolding. Higher realities are available to us, is the message of Alex Grey’s art. And Alex has set himself the extraordinary task of depicting, in art, these higher truths. 10

---

6 Gebser, The Ever-Present Origin, :
   Time-freedom is not only the quintessence of time, it is also the ‘conscious quintessence of all previous temporal forms. Their becoming conscious -in itself a process of concretion- is also a liberation from all these time forms; everything becomes present, concrete, and thus integrable present. But this implies that preconscious origin becomes conscious present, that each and every time-form basic to the one-, two-, and three dimensional world is integrated and thereby superseded. p. 356.

7 Gebser, The Ever-Present Origin, p. 480.

8 Shlain, Art and Physics, pp. 2627.


I use the effect of simultaneous X-ray and Kirlian photography in my paintings. This combination evokes the appearance of a clairvoyant healers vision.  

I want to make work that is obviously spiritual. Even if a person doesn't understand the work, they can tell that it points to mystical, idealized or clairvoyant states of consciousness...states where the mind is expanding into sacred spaces. I want to make visible the body, mind, and spirit on a two dimensional canvas. Take a multi-dimensional experience, and collapse it into a two-dimensional framework. I started painting because I was having strong visions that I wanted to represent.  

'Dying' (1990), Oil, 44x 60 ins.\textsuperscript{14}

‘if life and mind goes on after death, where does it go?’ \textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{14} Alex Grey, http://www.alexgrey.net.gs.html
\textsuperscript{15} Alex Grey, http://www.levity.com/mavericks/grey.htm p. 3.
Narrative Possibility and Integral Consciousness

When I ordered *The Ever-Present Origin*, my first book purchased online, I had already begun recording the student images of Narrative Possibility which are part of this research paper. I knew Gebser by name as he has been mentioned in several of Wilber's books, but his work did not arouse my curiosity until, in *Sex, Ecology and Spirituality*, I encountered Wiber's acknowledgment that in his books *Up from Eden* and *Eye to Eye* he...

...followed the groundbreaking work of Jean Gebser in recognizing four major epochs of human evolution, each anchored by a particular structure (or level) of individual consciousness that correspondingly produced (and was produced by) a particular worldview. These general stages Gebser called the archaic, the magic, the mythic, and the rational. 16

The essence of the above quote was already familiar to me, but Wilber then referred (through the words of Georg Feuerstein) to Gebser's approach to Integral Consciousness and the following quote initiated my subsequent research to include the possibility that Narrative Possibilities are a move towards Integral Creativity. According to Feuerstein's interpretation of Gebser, the integral-aperspective structure is a nascent structure of consciousness which for the first time in human history, permits the conscious integration of all previous (but co-present) structures. 17 Wilber's approach is clear, his model of the evolution of consciousness states that each structure includes and transcends the previous structure, however, co-presence has an emphasis that implies something different. This difference in approach, I discovered, is fundamental. Unlike Wilber, Gebser is not interested in outlining levels of man, or in a mental illumination of the various structures but in disclosing the transparency of man as a whole and the interplay of the various consciousness structures which constitute him. 18

Wilber has continued to support Gebser's structures in his four-quadrant model, but he presents a complex, step-by-step outline of them. Wilber maintains that 'stages' are developmental and formative and are, therefore, only a temporary way of generating, experiencing, knowing and interpreting reality whereas basic structures are the enduring capacities or pathologies 19 of a particular worldview. Further, in the course of development, once a basic structure has emerged it remains in existence, not only fulfilling its own functions and carrying out its own tasks but also contributing to or even acting as ingredients of its senior structure. 20 Thus, Wilber explains:

---

19 Wilber, *Eye to Eye*, describes pathology as ‘bad interpretation or maybe misinterpretation’.
   The self, the mental self anyway, is a linguistic structure, a creation of history and a creator of history. It lives by communication or dialogue, it is constructed of units of meaning or symbols, and it lives out a course in time or history. It is a story; it is a text. And the only way you understand a text is by good interpretation, just as you understand War and Peace, for instance. p. 181. (his italics)
The world view of the lowest levels...matter, sensation, and perception (treated together)...we have called “archaic,” “pleromatic,” “uroboric,” and so on. This world view (so primitive as to hardly merit the name) is largely undifferentiated, global, fused, and confused...it’s the way the world looks when you only have physical and sensoriperceptual structures. When the higher structures emerge, the archaic world view is lost or abandoned, but the capacity for sensation and perception is not. The latter are basic and enduring structures, the former is merely the transitional or phase-temporary cognitive map associated with them.  

21

In Wilber's model (see p. 39.) the basic structures emerge from the integration and differentiation of previous cognitive structures, and are documented in one strand of the quadrant: UL Interior-Individual, intentional and subjective. The three other strands UR Exterior-Individual: third-person, behavioral and objective, LL Interior-Social (Cultural): worldviews and shared values, meanings and ethics and LR Exterior-Social: material institutions, geopolitical formations and forces of production, are transitional.23 Gebser is considered a cultural philosopher and his outline of consciousness is, in Wilber's view, situated as LL. Interior-Social (Cultural). However the capacities of the Archaic: sensation and perception, Magic: image and symbol, Mythic: concept and rule and the reasoning capacity of the rational are each successively integrated to enduring structures. Thus, just as the capabilities of these transitional worldviews endure in preoperational, operational, and formal operational structures they will also, together with their correlates, be integrated in the presently emerging and enduring structure: Vision Logic.  

25

Wilber interchanges his term, Vision Logic with Gebser’s, Integral-Aperspective Consciousness, but although there are overlaps in meaning they are not the same. According to Wilber, Vision Logic establishes networks of those creative relationships already established by the formal-operational mind. It places propositions, or possibilities, alongside numerous others, 'so as to be able to see, or “to vision” how the truth or falsity of any one proposition would affect the truth or falsity of the others. Such panoramic or vision logic apprehends a mass network of ideas, how they influence each other, what their relationships are. It is the beginning of truly higher-order synthesizing

21 Wilber, Eye to Eye, p. 275.
22 Wilber, Integral Psychology, In his overall hierarchical model sometimes named (The Great Nest of Being), Wilber explains that the self, which is the seat of identity, will, and defenses, must navigate, balance, and integrate all the various developmental stages and structures it encounters:
   Each time the self (the proximate self) steps up to a new and higher sphere in the Great Nest, it can do so in a relatively healthy fashion…which means that it smoothly differentiates and integrates the elements of that level…or in a relatively pathological fashion…which means it either fails to differentiate (and thus remains in fusion/fixation/arrest) or it (fails to integrate (which results in repression, alienation, fragmentation)). pp. 89-92. (his italics)
24 Although Gebser’s theory of evolution is not one based on progress, as Bernie Neville writes, his work documented “the evolution of consciousness through four “mutation”. He described a primitive “archaic” structure of consciousness, its mutation into a “magic” structure c 750,000BC, then to a “mythical” structure c 20,000BC and a “mental” structure c1000BC.’ La Trobe Uni. Bernie Neville, accessed 10 November 2004, http://www.latrobe.edu.au/ife/staff/Gebserian.doc p. 1.
25 Wilber, Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, p. 119.
capacity, of making connections, relating truths, coordinating ideas, integrating concepts.  \(^{26}\)

Many of the attributes of Vision Logic, as espoused by Wilber, are recognisable in a work of Narrative Possibility. In its developmental unfolding this method expresses, as each structure is successively integrated, many of the capacities associated with the Archaic: sensation and perception, Magic: image and symbol, Mythic: concept and rule and the reasoning capacity of the rational. The sequential evolution of a Narrative Possibility can also be traced from the first undifferentiated wash, to the finding and initial articulation of form and representation, to the recognition and construction of connection, context, balance and possibility (and the suspension of form that does not have appropriate ‘fit’), to the selection and discernment of interconnection and internal integrity, and to differentiation and integration. And too, Vision or Network logic resonates with the methodology of Narrative Possibility. In the unfolding images, specifically in the later aspects:

\[\ldots\text{a tentative big picture is assembled}; \text{it is checked against further detail, and the big picture readjusted}. \text{And so on indefinitely, with ever more details constantly altering the big picture}\ldots\text{and vice versa}. \text{For the secret of contextual thinking is that the whole discloses new meanings not available to the parts, and thus the big picture we build will give new meaning to the details that compose it.} \]^{27}

In the context of my research into Integral Consciousness and Narrative Possibility I have acknowledged and included each of Wilber's four-quadrants through first person accounts, theoretical exploration, cultural worldviews and the influence of ideology and education as they pertain to expression and to art and literary theory:

An integral theory of art and literary interpretation is thus the multidimensional analysis of the various contests in which...and by which...art exists and speaks to us: in the artist, the artwork, the viewer, and the world at large. Privileging no single context, it invites us to be unendingly open to ever-new horizons, which broaden our own horizons in the process, liberating us from the narrow straits of our favorite ideology and the prison of our isolated selves. \(^{28}\)

According to Wilber's model, Narrative Possibility also honors the best of Post Modernism by accepting that:

1. Reality is not in all ways pregiven, but in some significant ways is a construction, an interpretation (this view is often called constructivism); the belief that reality is simply given, and not also partly constructed, is referred to as “the myth of the given.”
2. Meaning is context-dependent, and contexts are boundless (this is often called contextualism).
3. Cognition must therefore unduly privilege no single perspective (this is called integral-aperspectivism). \(^{29}\)

\(^{26}\) Wilber, \textit{Eye to Eye}, p. 274.
\(^{27}\) Wilber, \textit{Integral Psychology}, p. 2.
\(^{28}\) Wilber, \textit{The Eye of Spirit}, p. 134.
\(^{29}\) Wilber, \textit{Integral Psychology}, p. 163.
But, in Gebser’s Integral-Aperspectival Consciousness and in aspects of Narrative Possibility there are important differences and these become apparent in Wilber’s definition of Vision Logic:

…vision logic is a higher holon that operates upon (and thus transcends) its junior holons, such as simple rationality itself. As such, vision-logic can hold in mind contradictions, it can unify opposites, it is dialectical and nonlinear, and it weaves together what otherwise appear to be incompatible notions, as long as they relate together in the new and higher holon, negated in their partiality but preserved in their positive contributions.  

Wilber’s theory of Vision Logic depends on and employs rationality. This emphasis he deems necessary as it enables us to take the perspective of others. To cognitively picture the worldview of another person or culture requires the capacity for perspectivism. ‘Rationality, to put it simply, is the sustained capacity for cognitive pluralism and perspectivism’.  
To substantiate this conclusion and the superiority and evolutionary potential of rationality, particularly in relation to the exploration of structures of consciousness, he says rationality is the only structure that can tolerate structures other than itself and further ‘it is from the platform of rational pluralism that the next stage, the truly aperspectival-integral (and universal-integral), can be reached’.  

Integral-Aperspectival Consciousness, in Gebser’s approach, does not depend on the mental/rational structure, although he states that ‘in our era, which is now coming to a close, we are accustomed to considering the validity and necessity of everything from a mental standpoint. But the mental/rational is not even adequate to “comprehend” the mythical, not to mention the magic’  

Not only is this structure inadequate as a ‘way of knowing’ but, according to Gebser ‘we cannot employ the methods derived from and dependent on our present consciousness structure to investigate different structures of consciousness, but will have to adapt our method to the particular structure under investigation’.  
Hence, perspectivism is only one ‘way of knowing’, the polar movement of opposites is another however:  

An ordering scheme based on a world of relationships would be a magic postulate; one which merely relativizes systematic points of view would be merely a mythical concept according to which the factor of movement and the “other” point of view would be mentalized.  

Integral-aperspectival-consciousness, then, requires the concretization of the structures in their ‘respective degrees of consciousness’ and has one basic perquisite: ‘the parts must be heard or experienced, intuited or endured, seen or thought in accord with their essence’. 

30 Wilber, Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, p. 185. (his italics)  
In other words, all that was once assigned to the inactivity of forgetfulness, as well all that is latent,\(^ {37}\) becomes available for a fully realised wholeness. By integration, then, Gebser means:

\[
\text{…the re-establishment of the inviolate and pristine state of origin by incorporating the wealth of subsequent achievement. The concretion of everything that has unfolded in time and coalesced in a spatial array is the integral attempt to reconstitute the ‘magnitude’ of man from his constituent aspects, so that he can consciously integrate himself with the whole.} \quad \text{\textsuperscript{38}}
\]

Although the constituent aspects, the structures of consciousness, and their characteristics have been identified by Gebser, and his interpreters, in numerous ways, I am concerned with the expression of these aspects:

The archaic structure is difficult for us to comprehend, according to Gebser who describes it as zero-dimensional, spatial, temporal and completely non-differentiated reality characterised by dormancy and full identity between inner and outer.\(^ {39}\) The transition to the magic structure possibly includes a post-archaic and a pre-magic structure but Gebser has not found decisive evidence for these.\(^ {40}\) The reality of the magic structure however, while still intimately immersed in nature, begins a system of association in which individual objects, deeds, or events become separated from one another, so that zero-dimension changes to points in the over-all unity. This is a world of pure but meaningful accident; a world in which points can be interchanged at will and in which all things and persons are interrelated.\(^ {41}\) Myth, of course, is characteristic of the mythical structure and it ‘is distinct from magic in that it bears the stamp of the imagination (imago, Latin “image”)’ and whereas the magic structure brought about a detachment from nature and an awareness of the external world, the mythical ‘leads to the emergent awareness of the internal world of the soul’.\(^ {42}\) Myth is also characterised by polarity:

\[
\text{Just as the archaic structure was an expression of zero-dimensional identity and original wholeness, and the magic structure an expression of one-dimensional unity and man’s merging with nature, so is the mythical structure the expression of two-dimensional polarity.} \quad \text{\textsuperscript{43}}
\]

Myth is both a silent and inward contemplation and that which renders the soul visible so that it may be represented.\(^ {44}\) Myth is engendered by the urge to communicate, and is both the creative expression of symbols and legionary creatures, and the duplication of external realities and situations.\(^ {45}\)

\(^{39}\) Gebser, \textit{The Ever-Present Origin}, pp. 43/44.
\(^{40}\) Gebser, \textit{The Ever-Present Origin}, p. 45.
\(^{41}\) Gebser, \textit{The Ever-Present Origin}, p. 46.
\(^{43}\) Gebser, \textit{The Ever-Present Origin}, p. 66. (his italics)
\(^{44}\) Gebser, \textit{The Ever-Present Origin}, p. 67.
\(^{45}\) Feuerstein, pp. 78/79.
While the magic structure is nonperspectival and the mythical is unperspectival, the mental structure is perspectival and is expressed by directional and abstract thought, and the mastery of space, and its characteristic attitude is anthropomorphic: “man is the measure of all things” (Protagoras). All structures have both an efficient and deficient character, but it is the deficient form of the mental: the rational, and its expression that is most pertinent to the present Western culture. The rational structure cannot comprehend the mythical or the magical, thus:

We have conceded the status of reality to only an extremely limited world, one which is barely one-third of what constitutes us and the world as a whole. The new integral structure, on the other hand, requires us to recognize all “preceding” structures and the irrevocable efficient actualities which they integrate and make perceptible.

In their respective writings on Integral Consciousness, Wilber is mostly concerned with the evolution of individual consciousness and the manifestations attendant in cultural, societal, and scientific domains, and Gebser, although reiterating that ‘whenever we encounter historical topics we are definitely in the mental structure’, has provided evidence of the different structures as they manifested in different epochs. In *The Ever-Present Origin* he includes a scattering of visual representations which are, of course, contextual. Nevertheless it is possible to find several images and descriptions that stand out as similar in essence to aspects of Narrative Possibility:

**Magic Structure:**

![Student E. (2000). Acrylic on canvas, A3](image)

---

The magic structure: ‘while still intimately immersed in nature, begins a system of association in which individual objects, deeds, or events become separated from one another, so that zero-dimension changes to points in the over-all unity. This is a world of pure but meaningful accident; a world in which points can be interchanged at will and in which all things and persons are interrelated.’

---

Myth ‘is distinct from magic in that it bears the stamp of the imagination (imago, Latin “image”)’ and whereas the magic structure brought about a detachment from nature and an awareness of the external world, the mythical structure ‘leads to the emergent awareness of the internal world of the soul’.  

---

Mythic Structure:

My work with Narrative Possibility, including the scanning of the painted image (on following page), preceded my meeting with Gebser's approach to Integral Consciousness. Finding the similarities, and the differences, in this image was surely an event of significance.

Figure 19: “The Prince with the Crown of Feathers,” colored stucco relief from Knossos (Crete); restored; ca. 1500 B.C. (reduced in size; actual height: 2.10 m).

The *Prince with the Crown of Feathers* depicts a man’s extrication from nature, and the first awareness of soul. The crowned head ‘looks above and over the earth. Its eyes could already reflect the sky, and the head is not ornamented by small flowers or fruits or vines, but rather by light airy feathers’. While the similarities in expression are evident in these images, the two extant differences are not a negation of this. Firstly, according to Gebser, the mythologeme of a sea voyage is also a symbol of man’s gradual mastery over the soul, and to look into the mirror of the soul is to become conscious. Further, in contrast to the leftward movement still evident in the ‘Prince with the Crown of Feathers’ which is invariably indicative of an emphasis on the unconscious, the movement to the right is a movement towards emergent consciousness.

![Student E. (2000). Acrylic on canvas, A3](image)

**Mental-Rational Structure:**

Although Gebser does not include illustrations that express this structure, he makes it clear that this is the structure characterised by perspective, and that perspective ‘locates and determines the observer as well as the observed. The positive

---

54 Gebser, *The Ever-Present Origin*, p. 70.
result is a concretion of man and space, the negative result is the restriction of man to a limited segment where he perceives only one sector of reality. Gebser does state, however, that the perspectival means and techniques attained perfection with Leonardo Da Vinci, who discovered aerial and colour, as opposed to linear, perspective.

According to Gebser, the Integral structure, is a new capacity, and not a mere sum of the old, and Integral-aperspectivism (Vision Logic) means, according to Wilber, that as many perspectives as humanly possible must be included in an integral embrace. Despite the differences in their approach Gebser and Wilber agree that the present emphasis, and one necessary to a new worldview, is on integration. I am not suggesting that the expression of Integral Consciousness and Narrative Possibility are synonymous, they are not. But rather than embracing as many perspectives as is humanly possible, I do suggest that Narrative Possibilities includes expressions that are nonperspectival, unperspectival and perspectival. And that, as the title of my research states, Narrative Possibility is a method of creative integration and, in both practice and philosophy, a move towards Integral Creativity.

---

ORIGINEIGHT

Student B. (2001), Acrylic on canvas, A3
Towards Integrality

The artist, according to Frederick Franck, is the unspoiled core that is within us all, that usually shrivels up and is forgotten because we are choked by schooling, training and conditioning:

Even in the artist who is professionally trained to be “creative” this unspoiled coil shrivels up in the rush towards a “personal style”, in the heat of competition to be “in.”

And yet, he says:

…this core is never killed completely. At times it responds to Nature, to beauty, to Life, suddenly aware again of being in the presence of a mystery that baffles understanding and which only has to be glimpsed to renew our Spirit and make us feel that life is a supreme gift. ¹

In my exploration of creativity, in the unfolding of its story, and in presenting my approach to Narrative Possibility, I have questioned its significance to those of us who share the present western worldview. I have accepted the evidence that worldviews change, and that, individually and collectively, the rational (three dimensional, perspectival) consciousness predominates in our culture and society. Further, I have ascertained that a change of consciousness is necessary if we are to ameliorate the present imbalance. The dominance of the rational structure and the subsequent loss of the creative potential have prompted my assertion that Narrative Possibility is both a practical and philosophical method of addressing this imbalance for both adults and children.

The transition from innate balance to imbalance is particularly evident in the ‘artwork’ of children and the stories they tell. Children, especially in the years before attending school and occasionally in the early years of school, tell their stories through a wonderful creative freedom. Just as their verbal stories can move in time and space and subject matter, so to they can begin a story by drawing or painting and in the experience of forming an image the story can change. The flexibility to change in the moment requires a response to an insight, but can also include a reaction to a contextual environment, and it is the reactive element which eventually becomes emphatic.

As Shlain says:

The price we pay in order to think like adults is the loss of our naïve and innocent outlook. Most of us never look back, because the road is overgrown with thicket and we abandon hope of return. ²

As children mature, the experience of language and the experience of making form becomes an entry into a symbolic story in which the form and the story are formed and reformed by common sense. At first this story continues to flow and unfold through a stream of consciousness and a process of storytelling that changes according to the need of the moment. Gradually, however, change becomes more a matter of adjustment in

2 Shlain, The Alphabet versus the Goddess, p. 141.
communication, and stories become conceptually dominated, purposeful, and generated by a nucleus of experiences, associations, comparisons and knowledge around which other stories take on meaning. Certain aspects of the creative potential appear to dissipate, then, with the need to conform to an extended environment and the need to share socially and culturally conditioned stories. Once inculcated properly into particular social and cultural norms of thinking, doing and communicating, at least those inculcated into the norms of Western society, children’s potential creativity is overtaken by forms of reason and logic which are reactionary and necessitated by learned structures of communication. I am not suggesting that this process is inherently wrong, only that it abandons other ways of knowing.

And thus, as the child learns to communicate by and with the contemporary tools of language (by the acquisition of skill, by the concentration and development of the abilities needed for reading and writing and by the need to conform with whatever is deemed to be perceptually correct and perspectively accurate representation,) the art and craft of story telling and showing grows and gains in strength. These acquisitions are cumulative and stories too grow from ideas that follow sequence, and although the imaginative element may be strong it is already a socially and culturally communicable imagination. Although children’s visual narratives are predominantly illustrative before and during the school-age years, in these later years they only rarely include experiences of the moment or creative perception. In becoming aware of conformity and what is judged to be ‘good’ work, children often become so beset with comparison that unconventional forms are not allowed. Deviations are rubbed out, often vehemently and often with cumulative frustration. Found forms, if there are any, are usually regarded as temporary amusements, and with the proliferation of books on cartoons and ‘how to draw’ individual expression is suppressed. An example of this: a way to draw a hand, instructs the ‘creative artist’ to draw a plate with five sausages extended from the top half of the rim! Even when working with Narrative Possibility, of course, some technical help may be necessary, but it is offered appropriately, and usually when a found form needs detail or clarity.

When I approached the students and asked them to participate in my research I had not considered age an important factor, but the students involved in the sequential recordings were all teenagers and I considered it necessary to view their experience of Narrative Possibility in the context of Wilber's theory of evolution as he identifies the progressive unfolding of structures of consciousness over the lifetime of an individual. Specifically, the following is focused on the structure Wilber equates with Formal Operational Structure, the structure preceding Vision Logic. In Wilber's model Formop is:

…a very relational type of awareness: all the possible relations that things can have with each other need to be held in awareness….and this is radically new. This is not the “wholeness” of syncretic fusion, where the integrity of wholes and parts is violated in a magical fusion, but rather a relationship of mutual interaction and mutual interpenetration, while wholes and parts, while remaining perfectly discrete and intact, are also seen to be what they are by virtue of their relationship to each other.  

The average age of the emergence of the basic early Formal Operational Structure is, according Wilber, 13-14 years. The Late Formal Operational Structure is generally around 15-19 years, while Vision Logic or integral Consciousness occurs usually, between ages 21-28 and although different terminology is used, other theorists (Piaget, Cowan) agree. The differences between early and late formop are not clear, but some of the general characteristics of this rational, rational-existential worldview are that:

...rationality introduces a new and more abstract understanding of mathematics, logic, and philosophy, but these are all quite secondary to the defining mark of reason: *reason is a space of possibilities*, possibilities not tied to the obvious, the given, the mundane the profane.

...it is the first structure that is highly reflective and highly introspective; it is experimental (or hypothetico-deductive) and relies on evidence to settle issues; it is universal as pluralism or perspectivism; and it is prepositional (can understand “what if” and ‘as if’ statements). But all of these are just variations on the central theme: reason is a space of possibilities.

The capacity of the mind's eye, or creative imagination, in formal operational awareness is, in Wilber’s words ‘to see the possibilities of *what might be*, possibilities that point towards worlds not yet in existence and worlds not yet really seen, the great, great doorway to the invisible and beyond’. Although his description of the formal operational fits well with Narrative Possibility, I continue to be wary of his hierarchical model. In general, those who have mapped and named the spectrum of human consciousness: the experience of consciousness and evolving consciousness, suggest in words, metaphors, symbols, forms, perceptual recognition, and framed concepts that: consciousness manifests and evolves in a recognisable and progressive order and fits a spiritual, mental, emotional and physical precedent.

This progressive, and continuous, model is the foundation of our present approach to education but as Gebser points out: ‘The apparent continuity is no more than a sequence subsequently superimposed onto overlapping events to lend them the reassuring appearance of a logically determinate progression’. Addressing the possibility of a new approach to education, Bernie Neville asks what happens ‘if we detach ourselves from this notion and the myth of progress in which developmental psychology is embedded?’ Rather than the conventional, and sequenced, stages of childhood and adolescent development which are ‘a series of hurdles to be jumped before progress to more functioning becomes possible’, we might, instead, acknowledge that consciousness is plural and that the child's experience and expression are

---

7 Wilber, *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality*, p. 231. (his italics)
provisioned by the, presently, dominant mode. In a classroom situation where ideology, conformity and progressive learning mould a child’s expression, the introduction of Narrative Possibility will provide a balance in which the rational structure is expressed in interplay with other structures, it is another way of knowing. As a means of creative expression, Narrative Possibilities do not re-activate or illuminate the archaic, magical, mythical structures of consciousness, rather they give form and exposition to all structures of expression, without privileging any, and require a discipline that is ‘a continuous act of integration and directing’. Narrative Possibilities do need certain maturity, but they do not transcend rationality in hierarchical sequence. They do, however, employ a form of hierarchy. In the unfolding of a story elements shift, and when an element or relationship is in focus it becomes, temporally, over-arching. Hierarchies do exist in this approach but in any rigidifying structure. Gebser explains:

...everything depends on “knowing” when to respond actively and when passively, when to let things happen and when to make things happen, while hearkening to the magic events correlating to the mythical, and taking into account the mental, thus giving an appropriate degree of direction to these magic and mythical events.

The ‘teaching’ approach to Narrative Possibility also depends on “knowing” but not a matter of knowing, teaching or even speculating about specific structures. This approach would involve identifying where and when the magic, mythic and rational/mental show through or are presentiated (see glossary), and necessitate a process of categorising and rationalising. Teaching in this context is a matter of encouraging the creative process and offering help when and if it is needed. As the following examples, from students in Grade 1 and 2 demonstrate, even very young children express their creative potential in this method, and delight in it.

---

12 Gebser, The Ever-Present Origin, p. 204.
I do not suggest that the present approaches to ‘art’ education should be abandoned, but I do think its importance is more rational than creative, and that the present competitive emphasis, and this includes all manner of ‘art’ competition, does not give the necessary opportunity for exploration, expression and integration. Incorporating a weekly session of Narrative Possibility into children’s school timetable would offer balance, as well as the practical and philosophical aspects implemented by the process. I have had the privilege of working with students either individually or in small groups, and foresee probable difficulties if an entire classroom of children is working with this method. However, a group of eight to ten children can interact well in the early stages, and in later school years. When research becomes more essential to the articulation of forms, adolescents can work either independently or on group projects, and engage in dialogue.

How else such a project can be implemented is beyond the scope of my present research. Like a Narrative Possibility it is in potential, and ‘how to’ is there for the finding.
THE NARRATIVE POSSIBILITY approach to painting

RECORDING THREE OF PAINTING: THE TRYST. DETAIL TO FORM AND CONTEXT ARE BEING APPLIED
Making a Difference

An integral worldview, one that integrates critique and creativity (*Verstand* and *Vernunft*) is, potentially, a ‘shared experience of co-creation and includes the rational, but not at the expense of interactive myth, magic, metaphor, stories, play, and artistic expression’ \(^{14}\) and it is a balance between these expressions that is imperative to the practice and philosophy of Narrative Possibility.

Jean Gebser claimed, in 1949, that many instances of integral consciousness in both sciences and arts were already in evidence. It was apparent in painting, he said, despite the ‘contraries’ of style and he pointed to the following:

Impressionism dissolves form; Pointilism discloses the vibrations of space. The Primitivists (Henri Rousseau, la Douanier, and his followers) radically denounce perspective and attempt to break new ground from an infantilistic attitude, Fauvism masters a new relationship between line and color, that is, between space and time, or, with reference to Paul Klee's definition of line and color, the artist masters the relationship between the quantitative (measurable line) and the qualitative (color). Expressionism attempts an emotionally laden onslaught against the residua of the conception and depiction of the natural world; Futurism, particularly cubism, forms inceptually the new, spherically transparent structure of the world. Surrealism succumbs to psychic temporicity by approaching the time problem...not without impunity...from the puberty zone, embellished by the churning of psychoanalysis, the so-called abstractionists...whose paintings could be more appropriately called structural...completely detach themselves from any form of palpable three dimensional objectivity. \(^{15}\)

And Wilber, some fifty years later, is in agreement that an integral consciousness is beginning to emerge, but although his four-quadrant model, and his interpretation of Vision Logic and an integral worldview, has gained prominence, it does not emphasise creativity.

In *Originone* I proposed a new story: an approach and attitude that recognises creativity as a necessary source and adjunct of change, a harbinger of change, and an integrating and evolutionary aspect of consciousness, and in the following chapters my inquiry has focused on the possibility that creativity is a natural potential largely blocked by the way civilization has developed, \(^{16}\) and that it is a faculty of thinking and making and an act of perception. Change, the need for it and the way of its implementation, and creativity are acts of perception but I do not think we understand the capacity of creativity. Certainly creativity has integrating aspects that include the perception of similarities and differences that do not only come from past knowledge and these perceptions, and appropriate actions, dissolve existing boundaries and present new possibilities. But as Bohm suggests ‘creation of this kind has been fairly rare’ and more to the point he goes on to say that:

---

16 Bohm, *Changing Consciousness*, p. 163.
…no really creative transformation can possibly be effected by human beings, either in nature or in society, unless they are in the creative state of mind that is generally sensitive to the differences that already exist between the observed fact and any preconceived ideas, however noble, beautiful, and magnificent they may seem to be.  

As I understand it, state is one aspect of creativity, but there are others: product, process, and event. In the course of my research I have looked at creativity and change as they have been broached and put into words by diverse paradigms and disciplines. Within each approach, which is, of course, sometimes traversed by others, creativity becomes many things: a product that can be measured and evaluated; a process that may be learned, unlearned, challenged, and repressed; an event that changes, a non-event that imitates, and a state of receptivity and openness. Each approach is a story, a narrative that communicates an aspect or aspects of creativity. My story did not become an in-depth study of the many traditional theorists, researchers and practitioners who are presently respected in the field of ‘creativity’. I do respect MacKinnon’s views on creative products (and their qualifications), however, and his fifth criterion has been my focus:

The fifth and highest criterion for a creative product is seldom met since it requires that the product create new conditions for human existence, transcending and transforming the generally accepted experience of man by introducing new principals that defy tradition and change radically man’s view of the world.

---

17 According to Bohm, On Creativity, 1998, we learn as children ‘from parents, teachers, friends and society in general’ to have a ‘…conformist, imitative, and mechanical state of mind’ and to honor preconceptions of security and ambition. This then means that an inquiry into the unknown ‘may well constitute a threat to the successful achievement of those narrow and limited goals’. Most of those who seek to escape conformity ‘fall into the trap of rebelling against it, by projecting an opposing or contrary set of ideals, and trying to conform to these’. And in most cases those who have attempted to change society do so ‘by means of a violent imposition of certain preconceived idea of producing social harmony that is just as mechanical and arbitrary as is the chaotic state of conflicting orders which it aims to eliminate’. pp. 16/18. (his italics)

18 MacKinnon, Creativity, North-Holland Publishing Company, London, 1970: an idea, a work of art, a scientific theory, the design of a building…may be a creative product; but if they are to qualify as true creations they must meet certain criteria. The first requirement of a creative product is novelty; it must be original. But the creativeness of a product when judged in terms of novelty, originality, or statistical infrequency is always relative to a given population of products. Those that are most creative are the ones that are novel or original in the experience of an entire civilization or of all mankind. Mere novelty of a product does not, however, justify its being called creativity. There is a second requirement, namely, that the product be adaptive to reality. In other words it must serve to solve a problem, fit the needs of a given situation, accomplish some recognizable goal. A third requirement that a fully creative product must meet is that the insightful reorganization which underlies it be sustained, evaluated, elaborated, developed, and communicated to others, in words, the creative product must be produced. Because there may be many solutions to a problem, there is a fourth criterion, met by a truly creative product, which demands that the answer which the product yields be an aesthetically pleasing one. The solution must be both true and beautiful. The fifth and highest criterion for a creative product is seldom met since it requires that the product create new conditions for human existence, transcending and transforming the generally accepted experience of man by introducing new principals that defy tradition and change radically man’s view of the world. pp. 24/25.
Weisberg’s premise that creative products are ‘firmly based on what came before’\(^\text{19}\) does not include the possibility that a product can defy tradition and change radically the view of the world, and thus although salient his premise does not fit an integral worldview. And while Csikszentmihalyi\(^\text{20,21}\) and Offner\(^\text{22}\) identify creativity as a furthering of certain domains, I consider this to be a limiting, rationalistic and (paradoxically) progressive approach to creativity and evolution.

Many stories about creativity point to creativity as somehow beyond both measurable and evaluable concept and product, but most stories become theories: reasoned thoughts put into words about what constitutes creative methods of thinking and making: the creative process. The present proliferation of techniques (methods that offer ways to tap creativity, think with it, and employ it,) are powerful and most promise the fulfillment of preconceived goals. A few of these focus on this faculty’s power and offer demonstrable practices to enable its utilization. Theories which claim that certain thinking and doing will produce, or at least contribute to, desired ends even in those who are not talented are followed by injunctions. Some injunctions focus on brainstorming,\(^\text{23}\) problem solving,\(^\text{24}\) and visualisation.\(^\text{25}\)

---

\(^{19}\) Weisberg, *The Nature of Creativity*, p. 173.


\(^{21}\) Csikszentmihalyi, ‘Artists agree that a painter cannot make a creative contribution without looking, and looking, and looking at previous art, and without knowing what other artists and critics consider good and bad art.’ p. 47.

\(^{22}\) Offner, cited in Csikszentmihalyi, p. 47.

\(^{23}\) S Arieti, *Creativity: the magic synthesis*, Basic Books, Inc., NY, 1976, explains that: Alex F. Osborn, * invented ‘brainstorming’ as a practical method of developing both individual and participatory creativity because he believed that creativity is an applied, teachable, and learnable art. Arieti writes:

One of Osborn’s leading points is what he called the *brainstorming principle*: instead of trying to think both critically and imaginatively at the same time, we should use our critical mind at one time and our creative mind at another. He devised the brainstorming technique in 1939. A group holds sessions together and advances new ideas. Four basic rules are to be respected: (1) criticism is ruled out; (2) freewheeling is welcomed… “the wilder the idea, the better”; (3) quantity is desired… the greater the number of ideas, the greater the likelihood of good results; and (4) combination and improvement are sought. Participants should suggest how ideas from other members of the group could be improved. The brainstorm session should be animated by a spirit of self-encouragement and a rejection of perfectionism. Osborn suggests that the ideal number of participants is between five and ten. The group has a leader who explains the rules, sees to it that they are not violated, and makes sure that ideas are not criticized and that the group does not break down into subgroups. p. 367.

See *A Osborn, Applied Imagination*, Scribner’s, 1953.

\(^{24}\) Problems, and inspiration, arise from three main, synergistic and intertwined, sources according to Csikszentmihalyi: *personal experiences, requirements of the domain, and social pressures*. p. 83.

And according to R Weisberg, *Creativity*, W.H.Freeman. NY, 1986, … there is very little support for the notion that creative solutions to problems come about in flashes of insight, independently of past experience.* On the whole, it seems reasonable to conclude that people create solutions to new problems by starting with what they know and later modify it to meet the specific problem at hand. At every step of the way, the process involves a small movement away from what is known, and even these small tentative movements into the unknown are firmly anchored in past experience. p. 50.


A small technical note: in addition to the natural states of waking, dreaming, sleping and nondual, there
Narrative Possibility is, of course, process oriented and experiential, and like the processes of brainstorming, problem solving and visualization, it is potentially, a move towards change. It does not, however, present direct instruction to achieve a pre-conceived idea, or ideal, rather it is an integrating experience. Thus, although I suggest that creativity is an event that, whether incremental, discontinuous or divergent, is a transition from one state to another, I do not associate Narrative Possibility with the experience Csikszentmihalyi, has called ‘flow’.

In my work with students I have not studied personality traits or selected those with creative potential as MacKinnon and Csikszentmihalyi have. I have not equated creativity with talent, genius or a behavioral need that adapts to a circumstance of survival (in this latter view creativity is understood as a servant of dominant life), but have taken Bohm’s proposal that (rather than only process, talent, acquired skill, evolutionary survival or something akin to grace,) creativity is innate, a human faculty available to, but often dormant in, all of us.

Although these and other theories have appeared, albeit briefly, in my research process, it has not been my intention to attempt to reconcile these approaches but to include them as aspects which light upon our present understanding of creativity, and to discern, within the context of this inquiry, their appropriate fit within the apparent necessity of a change of consciousness. Although creativity is not origin, it renders origin perceptible, according to Gebser. Furthermore, its capacity is not restricted to particular domains but is effective everywhere, and ‘creativity alone enables man to realize or “recover” in consciousness the pre-given actualities’.

are various ‘non-natural’ or non-typical states that have to be trained and therefore are not spontaneously available to all stages: certain meditative states, for example, or various states of shamanic visualization: these tap into different potentials of the gross, subtle, and causal states, but their actual contours are not usually available unless specifically trained or induced. p.8

Csikszentmihalyi, says that ‘flow’ is optimal experience and lists these nine elements to describe how it feels when an experience is enjoyable:
1. There are clear goals every step of the way.
2. There is immediate feedback to one’s actions.
3. There is a balance between challenges and skills.
4. Action and awareness is merged.
5. Distractions are excluded from consciousness.
6. There is no worry of failure.
7. Self-consciousness disappears.
8. The sense of time becomes distorted.


Dissanayake, ‘Art can be regarded as an inherited behavioral tendency to act a certain way in certain circumstances, which during the evolution of our species helped us to survive.’ p. 38.

 Bohm, Changing Consciousness, p. 163.

 Gebser, The Ever-Present Origin, p. 316.
The foundation of this work, and the research, has shaped and been shaped by its manifestation and while it is true that I did not know what to expect when I first decided to make Narrative Possibility, creativity, integral consciousness and change the focus of an academic paper, I did know that the exploration would involve research into aspects of lived experience. A life journey is composed of layers of meaning in which experiences form a reflective thread, a contextual time span and a text through which the lived experience of writing, of forming the thread, is also the contextual time marker. Stories, then, have emerged through the experience of writing, and stories have deconstructed the methods of storytelling, stories have retold the stories that orchestrated my life experiences and my thinking, and stories have quoted fragments of others’ stories and stories of stories. Some stories have been spontaneous, others have been purposefully layered, and others seem to be simple locations in space, time and place, made visible temporarily. But as stories have both foundation and transient qualities, some stories have been changed by their meeting with other stories and the journey will not end with a completion of this work, but with a self-imposed interlude.

What began for me in 1983, was then and still is an exploration that also accepts that a change of consciousness is possible. In stating this, I am aware that a future story, and a new view of reality, is inexpressible in the common words and images which implement present communication: even the concept of a change of consciousness is understood according to a relationship with the language of the known and experienced. And yet, while also acknowledging that language is limited, I concede that language also fosters communication, and generates the need to understand certain inner experiences that have little or no reality in the common waking state of human awareness. I know, for example, that ‘lived experience’ lives on: it is an evolving story, a canvas awash with interrelationship and the further potential of meeting.

I knew that the canvas was awash with potential when I began to question the nature of change in 1983, but I never suspected that some of that potential would bring me to the process of articulation necessitated by this research work. The language of words, according to Mehta, is the process of transmission. In this work words have been sanctioned, they have been the prominent means of communication enlisted to make transparent the story of an exploration and the story of its story. Of course, as Ong points out:

To make yourself clear without gesture, without facial expression, without intonation, without a real hearer, you have to foresee circumspectly all possible meanings a statement may have for any possible reader in any possible situation, and you have to make your language work so as to come clear all by itself, with no existential context. In essence the work of writing embraces things from the past and thinking in the present, and the need for this exquisite circumspection makes writing the agonizing work it commonly is. 32

In making my research an integral possibility, I have also relied on words and writing to articulate knowledge and ‘other ways of knowing’. In the context of an integral work, Gebser says that we must work out for ourselves the mode of articulation which gives it

32 Ong, p. 104.
the requisite clarity, and our attempt can only be inceptual or precursory inasmuch as we are today in a transitional period burdened by the proximity of deficient attitudes.  

“Every word,” he says, “is not only a concept or a fixed equivalent in writing; it is also an image and thus mythical, a sound and thus magic, a root and thus archaic, and thus, by virtue of this root meaning, still present from origin.”  

Although meanings change then, the original meaning of the word shines through.

In our present Postmodern society the meaning, however, depends on context(s) and on methods of interpretation(s). Academically, this is a reasonable exercise, but it is not the whole story. The capacity of creativity is not restricted to particular domains but is effective everywhere. In the world of the world, and the world of the individual, creativity is origin at play, it makes things up! And the wonder of it is not academic at all.

POSTSCRIPT 2004

Those who have contributed most to my research on both creativity and integral consciousness are, of course, Wilber and Gebser who maintain that a change of consciousness is a new vision of reality that is first manifested individually and shared. Sands too has been helpful, and while focusing on individual creativity, he has explained it as the motivation that then produces the action which, in turn, expresses that which was seen in a moment of inspiration. Bohm and Montuori have offered communal aspects and practices: Montuori suggesting that the present general perception of creativity still disregards its collaborative nature and the social, political, historical and economic factors that help shape the lives and achievements of writers and painters, creative persons whose work we like to think is done “alone”, and Bohm has proposed a creative form of dialogue. These authors have offered insights and possibilities that have moved beyond traditional approaches to and interpretation of creativity, and I have found relevance to Narrative Possibility in each of their visions of integral consciousness. However Gebser’s approach has most impressed me and, like Gebser I have articulated my research, and structured it, ‘differently’.

My presentation is not a traditional thesis, and while I acknowledge Gebser's claim that ‘Theses are part of rigidifying, perspectival thought’, I have attempted a ‘thesis’ which

---

35 Montuori:
   This hard-core belief, which in some circles would be described as a perfect example of “ideology,” has multiple social, political, and historical roots (Montuori and Purser 1997). As an assumption about the nature of creativity, and about the autonomous nature of the self, it is not shared by most other cultures around the globe, and even in the west it has only become prevalent in the last two hundred years or so. This does not make it necessarily wrong, but it does suggest that there is plenty of room for further inquiry. What is the “focal setting” that directs our inquiry into these channels? When we look for the sources of the creative act, in what space do we seek to locate it? pp. 191/192.
transcends ‘the constraints of linear time, linear space and linear logic’.  As Bernie Neville explains it:

Conventional academic writing remains grounded in the deficient rational consciousness of the modern era. Postmodern consciousness ...whatever we want to call it...demands something different, because the world is no longer experienced as rational consciousness has constructed it. Anthropocentrism, egocentrism, hierarchy, measurability and continuity are no longer perceived as essential components of the universe.

Presenting a non-traditional research work that has not been preconceived but has unfolded both creatively and critically, is a risky business, even to the ideal of ‘making a difference’ upheld by Social Ecology. But making the research process transparent, and following the philosophy of Narrative Possibility has allowed my research to be more spontaneous and open, and thus less limited by past knowledge and set aim. According to Gebser, ‘every set purpose is always charged with might and is, moreover, emphatically self-serving’. Sands too suggests that:

The decisions which one makes about “what to do” should come from the present and the present moment and that which one Sees in the present moment. This in itself is not difficult, but there is, or there can be, a difficulty in retaining the purity of that which is seen in the moment, for the force behind the invasion of thoughts, that is, items of the thinking process as deductions from the past or from anticipation of the future, is very strong.

But although Neville explains that ‘in an integral approach to research the past and the future are simultaneously experienced with the present’, I have, at least in the early stages of my research, conformed to some traditional thesis requirements in regards to purpose, plan and method as the Phase 1 document in Originone demonstrates. But these early stages may also, like Narrative Possibility, be regarded as the initial wash, the foundation from which forms were found, while any expressed intentions may be compared to the carefully prepared gesso ground made ready for inquiry. Thus, the first three chapters, which focus on written and visual communication, provide the impetus for the work’s creative evolution and provide the opportunity for spontaneity. Rather than determining indelible forms, or even outlines to be filled, these chapters show through or are presentiated in the entirety of the work.

I am aware that my work cannot easily be categorised or attached to a specific discipline. However I think, as Neville does, that a move towards academic writing and thinking that presents ‘a multi-perspectival vision, and abandons the perpectival pursuit

---

39 The word transparent and the notion of transparency are already entrenched in common meaning, but Gebser’s focus is on potential and individual integration. Gebser, The Ever-Present Origin, says:

At the same that our entire constitution becomes proportionately transparent; and not merely the “part” that is already manifest which we endeavored to make vivid by our exposition of the individual structure, but also the “part” that is still latent in us which, together with the part that is already manifest, becomes accessible to integration. p. 313.
40 Gebser, The Ever-Present Origin, p. 94.
41 Sands, 1984, Chapter, 11-8.
of a single “truth” for the acknowledgement of multiple incomplete truths’, 43 has been appropriate for my multi-layered methodology. In an integral approach, Neville continues:

we might expect to find the empathic, pre-causal, analogic forms of thought characteristic of the magic structure alongside the contemplative, irrational polar thought of the mythical structure and the reflective, categorising, rational, directed thought of the mental structure. We might expect awareness and acknowledgment of the narrative within which the study is imagined and the perspective from which it is viewed. 44

Of course, even the interpretation of what is to be expected in an integral work is controversial. Wilber and Gebser tell a different story. Wilber maintains that the integral or worldview of Vision Logic adds up 45 all perspectives and is a step in an already defined hierarchical structure, and Gebser states that, rather than by addition, the aperspecival worldview is engendered by intensification and mutation. Gebser also insists that the new consciousness structure has nothing to do with might, rule, and overpowering; that it cannot be striven for, only elicited or awakened, and that anyone who strives for it, intending to attain it mentally, is condemned to failure at the outset. 46 Wilber, however, is certain that the coming transformation will need a revolution in which a planetary vision, created by the ‘cognitive potential’ of individuals, will catapult a collective consciousness to a new and higher release. 47 There are, of course, interconnections in their views, and Neville points out that in Gebser's notion of integrality 'reality is manifested not only in the aggregation of complimentary and incomplete “truths”, but also in the contradictions and tensions between them'. 48 These interconnections, contradictions and tensions have become apparent to me now as I prepare to present this work for academic assessment. Although Wilber and Gebser present different, sometimes contradictory, views, both views have been essential to the articulation of my cognitive, critical, and creative work.

As my research, thus far, has been focused on Narrative Possibility itself, and therefore is an exploration of its philosophical and practical significance to creativity, change, communication and an integral worldview, it is only now that I consider another step. When I undertook this exploration, I was certain that Narrative Possibility unfolds creative potential by a process of finding; thinking and making; selection and discernment; appropriate fit; internal integrity (or balance) and integration. Now, as this present exploration is brought to closure, I will continue my work with students with the added confidence that Narrative Possibility is significant as a method of integrating structures of consciousness and that it is another way of knowing. Finding Gebser's work, *The Ever-Present Origin*, during the course of my research was an event of significance for me, and it has opened a field of study where my work may find appropriate fit. But, Wilber has also inspired me to further suspect that Narrative

Possibility is also a method that assists in the evolution of cognitive potential. A follow up study of those who have participated in Narrative Possibility, and a study of those who may be interested in participating in the future could possibly focus on ‘cognitive potential’ although there are several areas in which my ongoing study could be directed. I have not yet attempted an in-depth exploration, but I am curious and delighted by the changes I have seen in those students who have specifically taken part in this present research. Only one of the students came to me with academic proficiency, the other students came with poor academic abilities, some also had attitude and school attendance problems and all but one was deemed mediocre in their school art programs. Today, four of those five students are achieving excellent results in their chosen fields. One has completed a degree in Fine Arts and will go on to do honors, another two have completed degrees in Art Education and Developmental Studies and will also do honors, and a fourth has begun study this year. (The fifth student began a university course, but has been seriously ill for the past two years.) The mature age student whose work I have shown on p. 181, has also now completed a degree. More generally, I have worked successfully with children and adults with physical, psychological and social problems and several older students with terminal conditions.

As well as looking into Narrative Possibility and ‘cognitive potential’ then, I suggest that further study and implementation of my method, may be appropriate to fields concerned with social change and that, in the field of counseling and caregiving, it may be a useful aid for those suffering forms of disabilities or illnesses which allow for image creation. Although these are early days for Narrative Possibility, I feel as though there is much more to be found in its story, and I present this paper with new and necessary questions.

I do not consider Narrative Possibility to be an exemplification of Integral consciousness, but my study to date confirms that it a move towards integral creativity, and, while attempting to articulate an integral approach, I consider my academic methodology to be a move towards integral cognition.

Integral Consciousness is, as yet, a Narrative Possibility. Gebser's concern, and mine, is with origin and its manifestation, creativity. It is through creativity that ‘preconscious origin becomes the conscious present; it is the most direct, although rarest, process of integration’. 49


Circle Pines Center, Michigan, USA, Summer, 1984.


Conti, S, Director of Art, Kashi Foundation, USA, 1993.


Hypertext Webster Gateway 1999.


Osborn, A F, Applied Imagination, Scribner’s, 1953.


Tower Hill School Magazine, Wilmington, Delaware USA, Autumn, 1984.


Wilber, K, A Brief History of Everything, Shambhala, Boston, 1996.


Williams, R, Keywords, Flamingo, London, 1983.


**INTERNET SOURCES**

Art Archive, *A Wyeth*, accessed 6 December 1998, 

Art Archive, *A Wyeth*, accessed 6 December 1998, 
http://www.artchive.com/artchive/W/Wyeth/wind_from_the_sea.jpg.html

Benking, S, & Stalinski, S, *Concreteness in Integral Worlds*, accessed 13 June 2003, 

Bohm, D, *Proposal*, accessed 6 December 2002, 

Combs, A, *Integral Conversations*, assessed 28 March 2003, 
http://www.integralage.org/docs/Combsintegral.html

Combs, A, *Integral Age*, accessed 28 March 2003, 
http://www.integralage.org/docs/Combsintegral.html

Egg Tempera Painting, accessed 19 December 1998, 
http://www.magma.ca/~mosielsk/paint/egg-temp/egg-temp.htm

http://www.findarticles.com/cf_dls/m1282/n14_v50/21102291/p1/article.jhtml

Gebser, J, *The Invisible Origin*, (his italics), assessed 28 March 2003, 
http://www.unca.edu/~combs/IntegralAge/Invisible-Origin.htm

http://www.integraleweltsicht.de/html/integralconsciousness.htm

Global Integral Research, *Integral Ecology*, assessed 5 April 2003, 
http://www.gircorp.org/docs/T119/integral_ecology.htm

Grey, A, *Paintings*, accessed 7 August 2004, 
http://www.alexgrey.net.gs.html


Merriam Webster Dictionary: http://www.m-w.com/


The Wyeth Center - Rockland, Maine, accessed 19 December, 1998,
   http://www.wyethcenter.com/datesaw.htm

The Wyeth Center, Andrew Wyeth, accessed 19 December 1998,
   http://www.wyethcenter.com/family.htm

University of Melbourne. Language and Learning Skills Unit, assessed 1 January 2004,
   http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/llsu/


Wilber, K, Online http://wilber.shambhala.com/html/books/miart_cfm/

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, Alex Grey, accessed 16 April 2004,
   http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alex_Grey
Glossary

In his book *Structures of Consciousness*, Georg Feuerstein has included a glossary which gives succinct introductions to Gebser's terminology. I have found his glossary very helpful, and to offer further elucidation to those of Gebser's terms I have included in my work, I have quoted Feuerstein.

**Acategorial**

‘Thinking in terms of categories, particularly the categories of space and time, belongs to the mental-rational structure of consciousness.’ The integral perception, for which the world is “pure statement,” transcends the mental-rational categories. ¹

**Acausal**

If the notion of destiny pertains to the mythical structure of consciousness, causality is central to the rational-mental structure of consciousness, which conceptualizes reality in terms of antithetical opposites. For the arational-integral structure of consciousness, reality…the ever-present origin…is acausal, which must be distinguished from the pre-causal (analogical) mode of the magical structure and the non-causal (polar) mode of the mythical structure, as well as from the ordinary mode of the archaic structure of consciousness. ²

**Aperspectival**

‘The mental-rational consciousness, which operates on the basis of a spatialization of reality, is intrinsically perspectival.’ The arational-integral is not ‘transfixed on partial view-points.’ ³

**Arationality**

‘The rational consciousness is a one-sided development of the mental structure of consciousness. It is far from being the apex of human evolution, it is essentially deficient and founded on a particularly virulent distortion of reality.’ ⁴

**Concretion**

‘The emergent aration-integral structure of consciousness is to be understood to be a process of concretion, whereby the originary spiritual (rather than the spirit) coalesces with consciousness.’ ⁵

**Evolution**

The concept of evolution, which contains the notion of progress, is an instance of directional or perspectival thinking pertaining to the mental-rational structure of consciousness. To understand the unfolding of the structures of consciousness as an evolutionary process is therefore a limiting point of view. What appears to the mental-rational consciousness as evolutionary progress is at once a progression away from origin. Each structure of consciousness spontaneously mutates out of the ever-present origin, leading to an intensification of consciousness. Viewed from origin itself, evolution appears

---

¹ Feuerstein, p. 211.
² Feuerstein, p. 211.
³ Feuerstein, p. 211.
⁴ Feuerstein, p. 211.
⁵ Feuerstein, p. 211.
as the visible execution of what is pre-given in the invisible origin. In this sense, the different mutations of consciousness are “back-leap” into the ever-present future.6

Holon

Holon are wholes that are parts of other wholes, indefinitely. ‘Whole atoms are parts of molecules; whole molecules are parts of cells; whole cells are parts of organisms, and so on. Each whole is simultaneously a part, a whole/part, a holon.’7

Inspiration

(a) n 1: arousal of the mind to special unusual activity or creativity 2: a product of your creative thinking and work; “he had little respect for the inspirations of other artists” [syn: {brainchild}] 3: a sudden intuition as part of solving a problem 4: arousing to a particular emotion or action [syn: {stirring}] 5: the act of inhaling [syn: {inhalation}, {breathing in}]. 8

(b) In his historical study of word meanings in culture and society Williams (1983), does not refer to the term inspiration, in relation to creativity. However the connection is apparent when he says: ‘in his Apologie for Poetrie, Philip Sidney (1554-86) saw God as having made Nature but having also made man in his own likeness, giving him the capacity ’with the force of a divine breath’ to imagine and make things beyond Nature.’9

Integrality

‘The process of integration is founded on concretion, that is to say, it does not occur on the abstract mental plane only.’10

Intensification

The unfolding of the structures of consciousness in human history can be understood as a process of growing intensification of consciousness, whereby the origin, which is spiritual in nature, becomes accessible to the ego-transcending individual. This intensification must not be confused with an expansion of consciousness, which is a spatial metaphor that pertains to the egoic mental-rational structure of consciousness.11

Latency

‘The concept of latency denotes everything that is not yet manifest or that is again unmanifest. That which is latent, or concealed, is the demonstrable presence of the future.’12

Narrative

Gerald Prince defines this term as ‘the recounting of one or more real or fictitious events’ but as ‘the product and process, object and act, structure and structuration’ (1988, 58). So far as other theorists are concerned, however, it almost seems a case of perm any two from this list of six.

Thus Gérard Genette points out that the word NARRATIVE (in French, récit) can refer to three separate things: either the oral or written narrative statement that undertakes to tell of EVENT or events; or the succession of real or fictitious events that are the subject of the DISCOURSE, with their varied relations; or, finally, the act of narrating (1980, 25-6).

---

6 Feuerstein, p. 216.
7 Wilber, Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, p. vii. (his italics)
8 Hypertext Webster Gateway, 1999
9 Williams, p. 82.
10 Feuerstein, p. 216.
11 Feuerstein, p. 217.
12 Feuerstein, p. 217.
In his own usage he reserves the word narrative for the first of these three, while the second refers to as STORY or DIEGESIS and the third as narrating. This makes good sense, but others have suggested alternative usages and one should be prepared for the possibility that the term may be used in any one or more of the three alternatives suggested by Genette.

On two points there is, however, agreement. First that a narrative must involve the recounting of an event or events, otherwise it is a description. And second that these events be either real or fictitious. The person telling the TV News what happened in an accident in which he or she was involved, is as much delivering a narrative as is the person telling a joke, or the Marlow of Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*.  

Perspectivity

'The discovery of perspective in art is associated with the European Renaissance, coinciding with the emergence of the rational-mental structure of consciousness. Perspectivity, as a way of relating to the world, is expressive of a highly crystallized form of ego-consciousness.'

Presentation

'The arational-integral process of integration is founded in the presentation, or “making present,” of all structures of consciousness through the presentation of origin itself, which includes the incorporation of the future.'

Systasis, systatic

'Systasis is an acategorial integrating process (and effect), which goes beyond the systematization characteristic of the mental-rational consciousness.'

Transparency

'The arational-integral structure of consciousness is characterized by its capacity to render self and world transparent or diaphanous, whereby the ordinary spiritual coalesces with consciousness.'

---


14 Feuerstein, p. 217.
15 Feuerstein, p. 218.
16 Feuerstein, p. 220.
17 Feuerstein, p. 221.