

MAXIMISING CREATIVITY - HAPPINESS, PLAY AND CREATIVITY RESEARCH: GETTING INTO THE FLOW AND HOW IT HELPS US IN DRAGON DREAMING PROJECTS

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ABSTRACT: *If we are going to be successful in building a new win-win-win culture for the Great Turning, away from the win-lose games we have been playing for thousands of years we need to maximise creativity on a scale never before attempted. This article sets the creative process in a larger context using Dragon Dreaming as a metamodel for understanding the nature of play and creativity.*

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THE CURRENT SITUATION

There is a strange question that is rarely asked “Why do people put up with situations that do damage to their lives?” Put another way, the Dalai Lama was recently asked what he found to be the strangest thing in the modern world. He replied that it was the way modern men themselves behave:-

“Because he sacrifices his health in order to make money. Then he sacrifices money to recuperate his health. And then he is so anxious about the future that he does not enjoy the present; the result being that he does not live in the present or the future; he lives as if he is never going to die, and then dies having never really lived.”

A paradox even worse than this, it is as if our structures are destroying the things that make these structures work in the first place. We are facing an institutional failure of a massive and worsening kind, at the time in which we need something very different.

- Our current system of securing the resources necessary for human life is reducing the capacity for future sustainability of that very life.
- The way in which current education systems are organised, actually have been proven to damage the ability of students to learn.
- In our health care systems there is no relation between the amount of money a community spends on health care and positive health outcomes for that community. In fact in many cases a negative result can be found.
- In the legal system, as the amount of money spent on law and order in our communities increase, there is a reduced confidence in policing as a means of producing public safety, and increasing evidence of injustices produced by structural violence within the system itself.
- In the world of business, we find that social and environmentally responsible businesses are hampered by a business model that sees a reduction in any concern except short term profitability which maximises returns to absentee shareholders.
- Our food production and distribution system sees the worldwide collapse of soil structure and viable ecosystems at the same time there is increasing evidence of obesity, malnourishment and world hunger.
- Governments are shown to have been captured by plutocrats more interested in private profit than the public good, and
- At the same time we have a world-wide economy that is incapable of economising, as money creation is built upon debt, not upon savings.

Why is this happening? I would argue that it is because we are applying an obsolete model of the nature of the world and of ourselves and of ways to solve problems in ways that not only fail in resolving the problems we face, but in fact make matters worse. Even worse, it is by the choices we make that we are robbing our children of the resources they need and at the same time killing the planet and making it an impossible place for complex life, both human and more than human, to survive for long in the future. We are precipitating

the 6th Mega-extinction of the planet, and undermining every one of the support systems that have made our existence possible. Any culture that acts in such a way is not only insane, it also has not got long to survive. How do we escape from this insanity?

All life is based upon an ability in some way to internally model the operation of the world in which it engages, in order to secure its survival. This modelling ability is found not just in animals, it also exists throughout life and has been found in examples such as in plants, fungi and bacteria. It seems a fundamental characteristic of life itself. It is the alteration of that model in relation to the environment that we recognise as “learning”. Learning is everywhere, but “awareness” is different. Awareness seems to be a different order of magnitude. Into this model of the world, those beings capable of “awareness” take the additional step of inserting a model of themselves.

At the Patrimônio de Matutu, in the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil, one of the centres of Dragon Dreaming in that country, I recently gave a lecture on the roots of Dragon Dreaming. I recounted how in 1982, an initiation, at Halonguali, Koroba District, in the Southern Highlands Province of Papua New Guinea, involving sleep deprivation, demonstrated for me that what we call reality is a form of consensual delusion, and that other realities are always present, often as close as our next breath. But how do we awaken from the delusory realities that surround us and discover the nature of truth?

Thus “Awareness”, which is the first of the 12 steps in Dragon Dreaming relates to our knowledge of ourselves as an actor or an agent in the world. It requires not just us to create a model of the world, but also to create a model of ourselves within our model of the world. This too is a phenomenon that is possessed not just by humans, but seems widely shared amongst a number of species. Gordon Gallup in the 1970s created a test for self awareness based upon the degree to which an individual was capable of recognising its individual self in a mirror, as distinct from believing it to be merely another animal. This ability has been demonstrated in children after the age of 18 months, in Chimpanzees and other Great Apes, in animals such as elephants and pigs, and even in some birds such as magpies, pigeons and crows. Thus awareness is linked to self-awareness, or a recognition of a “self” as an agent or actor in events in which one participates. Through the evolution of such self awareness repeatedly, it would seem to give complex social animals a degree of behavioural dexterity - the ability to model social behaviours in advance of their performance, and so to have a greater degree of mentally rehearsing behaviours and considering consequences.

But even with such awareness, Anthony Melo, in his book “Awareness: the perils and opportunity of reality”ⁱ demonstrates that most people, even though they don’t know it, are asleep. They are born asleep, they live asleep, they marry in their sleep, they raise the next generation in their sleep and they die in their sleep, without ever truly waking up. Waking up can be difficult. In Dragon Dreaming workshops I often recite one of the laws: “people only change when the pain of changing is seen to be less than the pain of staying the same.” And for most people, most of the time, staying the same seems preferable to changing.

At the end of the 19th Century, through the work of Freud, psychology came to view the central fact of human existence was “the illusion of central position”, the way in which we live out of the space created by this internal model of ourselves. In humans this “Awareness” can be defined as consciousness, subjectivity or sentience, and is found linguistically in the way we separate ourselves between the “I”, the active knower, and “me” or the object being known. Arising in speech, this subject - object dichotomy arises from the distinction between what we see as “things”. It has been suggested by linguists such as Noam Chomsky that this division between subject and object is a distinction which is found only in humans, but which seems to be absent in non-human communicationⁱⁱ. The philosopher Gilbert Ryle argues that this view of separation between self as subject and object perpetuates a false Cartesian dualism between “mind” and “body” - between self and behaviour, or between our self and the world in which we are active. In this view, “I am” is the centre of consciousness, beyond the differences of “I am a man”, “I am Australian” or “I am a father”. These are additions to the basic fact of the experience of consciousness, taught by culture or experiences. As Neville Goddard shows in “The Power of Awareness”, “I am is the self definition of the absolute, the foundation upon which everything rests. I am is the first cause-substance, the self-definition of God

‘I am hath sent me unto you
I am that I am
(Ayer asher ayer)
Be still and know that I am God.’

‘I am’ is a feeling of permanent awareness. The very centre of consciousness is the feeling of ‘I am’. I may forget *who* I am, or *where* I am, or *what* I am, but I cannot forget ‘I am’.

But as I explain in Dragon Dreaming workshops; this view of the separation of self from the world comes with an automatic, built in view about the nature of “power”. “I” the subject, “have” power over the object. Not only does this maintain the illusion of central position - necessary to secure survival, but it also creates a hierarchical win-lose structure to reality that is the source of the crazy awareness of which the Dalai Lama speaks.

Richard Maurice Buckeⁱⁱⁱ suggests that there are three levels of such a consciousness. Level 1 is simple bodily awareness, possessed by animals and humans alike, perhaps a “Consciousness Level 1” as measured by Gallop’s mirror test. “Level 2 Consciousness” he suggests is awareness of awareness, perhaps created through language and is therefore supposedly found only in humans, whilst Level 3 is “Cosmic Awareness”, awareness of the life and order of the universe, possessed only by humans who are enlightened. Such a hierarchical organisation, however is highly elitist, and supports “human exceptionalism”, the hubris of theories like those of Ken Wilber^{iv}, or the “Spiral Dynamics”^v views of Carley Greaves and Ken Buck.

But this anthropocentric view may seriously underestimate the degree of consciousness of the animal world. We do not have access to the inner “qualia” or nature of experience, outside of the subjective view of our human life. How do we “know” that animal experience of awareness is inferior to ours? For example, many species have senses far keener than those possessed by humans, such as echo-locatory sonar, as the essay on “being a bat”, by Thomas Nagel showed, we can have no experience of such a mind.

Similarly, the “cosmic consciousness” described by Wilber and Bucke, seems related to “peak experiences” described earlier by such insightful early psychologists as William James, in his “Varieties of Religious Experience”. Such “peak experiences” have been observed in the tranquillity and quietude of gorillas, observing a spectacular sunset, for instance. Clearly characteristics of human awareness, such as empathy and compassion, and the ability to identify with others, is rooted deeply in biological existence, as Jeffrey Mason demonstrates in his studies of the emotional lives of animals. Jane Goodall was in no doubt that David Greybeard, the wild chimpanzee with whom she shared contact at Gombe Stream, exhibited an interspecies awareness similar to the “cosmic consciousness” of “interbeing” recognised by Thich Nhat Hanh.

Whilst it is clear that human and animal consciousnesses interpenetrate, in Dragon Dreaming we do attempt to cultivate a different level of consciousness than that found in the modern experience of the everyday world. What seems to be missing in modern experience is an awareness of one’s position as an expression of the unfolding of life, what deep ecologists refer to as the evolution of an “Ecological Self” as distinct from the “Ego-logical self”. The awareness of our separate existence, with its narrowly circumscribed boundary of moral concern linked to gender, culture, nation, or species, seems in deep ecology to be linked to a larger identification with existence itself. But even more importantly, how do we spread such an awareness fast enough that it starts to influence human behaviour on a scale massive enough to halt the mega-extinction of complex life on the planet that we have unleashed, and prevent the irreversible processes that will damage the fabric of the life support systems upon which we depend.

The rate of change is accelerating. The stimulation our brains are being driven by is accelerating in a new way. Cultural evolution is driving this but our brains are biological entities. Our nervous, hormonal, cardiovascular systems are being activated by a stress response, which is the biological response to suddenness and alarm. Those that survived were nervous and cranky. Spending time in calm setting is important. Give really time to calm rest responses, parasympathetic system is rest and digest, as distinct from the sympathetic being 3F. 2/3rds of the cells of the amygdala are a tilted towards negative emotion. We need for places of sanctuary within our own brain in the middle of the hurley-burley, to be able to escape the win-lose activation system. To recognise we are in highwind high wave situation, and being agitated is the world we are in. The 4 level nature of evolution - DNA, epigenesis, behaviour and culture, is important.

The paranoid trance, based upon paper-tiger paranoia. In the 20th century one in 100 people died from warfare in the 20th century. But in the last 3 million years, it suggests that 12-15% of males died from violence. We evolved in a world of violence. We tend to overestimate threats, but underestimate opportunity. We also underestimate resources. These become automatic resulting biases built into our personality as the norm. We select information that confirms our trance, and ignore information that denies it. Fear breeds on itself. We are quickly alarmed by others and move towards fear responses, and over-learn from negative experiences. Harm comes through ignorance. We have to learn to see the real tigers, to see through the doubt and confusion that are being sown as it prevents us from seeing the real tigers, and distract us into seeing bogus tigers.

THE NATURE OF HAPPINESS

Daniel Kahneman shows how our thoughts about happiness are caught between two traps. Trap No. 1: We invest too much in trying to connect to happiness. Happiness is not what we think it is, in fact there are at least two different types of happiness. Trap No.2: The second trap is about experiencing or remembering. These are different things. People experience happiness different than they remember happiness.

After the event it is our memory of the experience that is left, which determines whether we feel it has been happy. Endings are important. These memories maintain the story of our life. We get confused between the two. The remembering self is a story teller. Our memory is what we keep from our experiences, and this is what we put into a story. Who suffers more - the person who experiences more pain or the person who had most pain? The research shows that the person who experienced highest pain at the end of an experience remembers the suffering more.

What defines a story of significant moments and endings? Our “experiencing self” experiences moments about 3 seconds long, about 600 million in a life, 600,000 in a month. Most of these are felt and not remembered, this is not the “remembered self”. The “remembered self” and the “experiencing self” also handle time differently. A 2 week vacation for the “experiencing self” feels 2 weeks as twice as better than one week, but in the “remembered self” the 2 week is not felt much more than the one week. Time has little effect on “story”. It is the “remembering self” who makes decisions - the “experiencing self” has no voice. Choices about the future are made on the basis of anticipated memories. Vacations are made in the service of our “remembering self” not the “experiencing self”.

When it comes to consuming time with your “remembering self”, you eventually come to remember only about 1.5 hours a month. Why do we put so much weight on memories rather than experiences? Linear time and memories give different answers. This suggests we have two different concepts of happiness. How happy is the “experiencing self” - compared with how happy is the “remembering self’s” memories over time. How satisfied or pleased are you when you think about your life? We must be aware of the distinction between experiencing and remembered self.

From the World poll of the Gallop Poll, the main lesson about happiness is that people are really different from how happy they remember their life and how happy they are living their life.

The Gallop Survey found that the happiness of the experiencing self increases in the USA to an income of about \$60,000 per year, but after that level there is a completely flat line. “Experiential happiness” does not improve. But the “remembering self” holds that more money makes you happy. A rise in income has only a small and transient effect on happiness and well-being, but people consistently overestimate this effect. The role of happiness research on public policy needs to take account of such findings.

Money and goals are important for the “remembering self”, but happiness is spending time with the people you like for the “experiencing self”. We do not attend to the same things when you ask the question “Are you happy” with the “experiencing self” and the “remembering self”.

THE NATURE OF PLAY

Stuart Brown and Christopher Vaughan in “Play: How It Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul” begin by quoting Plato.

“You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation.”

Nagle Jackson states, *“The truly great advances of this generation will be made by those who can make outrageous connections, and only a mind which knows how to play can do that.”*

Stuart Brown and the National Institute for Play reviewed more than 6000 life histories and shows that the absence of play increases the risk of lapsing into violence in situations of risk. He argues as play is woven into the fabric of social practices, we will dramatically transform our personal health, our relationships, the education we provide our children and the capacity of our corporations to innovate. A detailed study of homicidal males in Texas discovered that severe play deprivation was evident in the lives of these murderers, reducing their aptitude to empathise and understand what others felt. Later studies of highly creative and successful individuals showed they have a rich play life and that play affects mental and physical health for both adults and children. A severely play deprived child demonstrates multiple dysfunctional symptoms-- the evidence continues to accumulate that the learning of emotional control, social competency, personal resiliency and continuing curiosity plus other life benefits accrue largely through rich developmentally appropriate play experiences. Likewise, an adult who has “lost” what was a playful youth and doesn’t play will demonstrate social, emotional and cognitive narrowing, be less able to handle stress, and often experience a smoldering depression.

A predatory polar bear was observed stalking two tethered huskies. Rather than be intimidated by the predatory gaze, the huskies countered not by fear but by play signals, which led the bear to withdraw its claws and enter into the spirit with the dogs. A remarkable romping of the creatures was then observed. Play between mother and child leads through mirror neurones the right hemispheres of the brain becoming attuned. Jane Goodall’s work with Chimpanzees has demonstrated that the interspecies signals of play can be clearly recognised, as anyone who has a dog or cat can attest. It is one reason why all species of birds and animals are all attracted to infants of any species, as it is infants that are most capable of play.

Play is where the hand becomes in search of the brain and the brain is in search of the hand as an object of play. Frank Wilson (Neurologist) and Nick Johnson (Mechanic) have found that students incapable of fixing things have lost the ability to play with their hands. Play is always fuelled by curiosity and exploration.

There are different types of play

- **Imaginative play.** This engages the deepest resources of the individual intuition, and gets shaped into story. It is often associated with both day and night dreaming.
- **Solo play.** This is the ability of the individual to entertain themselves without the need for long contact with others.
- **Rough and tumble play;** in our culture this is usually suppressed by a well meaning preschool teacher and parents who prefer quiet and order to the seeming chaos that is typical of free childhood play.
- **Rambunctious play;** is healthy. The awareness on the part of parents and teachers of the value of free child-organized--meaning lightly supervised--play for elementary school children at recess is another area where greater insight about play hygiene is needed.
- **Experiment and Adaptive Play.** Construction play. Prototyping. Thinking with the hands. Testing.
- **Roleplaying behaviours;** This has been found to be a way of exploring design flaws. Adults don't believe it, but play is always an empathy tool.

Schools are taking these opportunities for play away progressively away from children, as they are seen as distracting to the “educational enterprise”. In fact the opposite is found. The ability to play actually increases the speed of learning and resolution of problems. The game of life Damanhur combines these elements of play enabling the solution to be found for interpersonal conflicts. In Dragon Dreaming one should always maximise the possibility for play.

Story telling is fundamental to play. Play is important for our survival as human beings, play deprivation leads to brain dysfunction. The opposite of play isn't work but it is depression. Humans are designed to play throughout their lifetime. In fact compared to other animals we are the “playful species”.

Establishment of human trust is determined in play through the learning of non verbal signals of communication. Children who do not play do not learn these signals, which leads them to react with lack of trust and uncertainty as adults. Play is thus a transformative force in life. Play enables you to pay attention to your own attention and inner drive, clear joyful image into how it connects to your life now. If adults can begin to reminisce about their happiest and most memorable moments, their “remembering self” can capture the emotion and visual memories of those moments and begin to connect again to what truly excites them in life. Generally, a person's purest emotional profile—temperament, talents, passions-- is reflected in positive play experiences from childhood. If you can understand your own emotional profile when it was in its purest form, you can begin to apply it to your adult life.

Our adult biology remains unique among all creatures, and our capacity for flexibility, novelty and exploration persists. If we suppress this natural design for play, the consequences are dire. The play-less adult becomes stereotyped, inflexible, humorless,

lives without irony, loses the capacity for optimism, and generally is quicker to react to stress with violence or depression than the adult whose play life persists.

Life becomes infused moment by moment with bodily, social play. Play is linked to sleep and dreams. It is when we can maximise our creativity.

CREATIVITY AND THE AHA EXPERIENCE

Where does creativity come from? Einstein had a dream at 16 that he was riding a bike at the speed of light. Memory of this dream later infused his discovery of Relativity Theory. Intuition always comes from dreams. This is why dreaming is so important to this process and why I call this the first step in Dragon Dreaming.

Edgar Mitchell, moonwalker on Apollo 14, had an “Aha” experience for which nothing in his life had prepared him. As he approached the planet we know as home, he was filled with an inner conviction as certain as any mathematical equation he'd ever solved. He knew that the beautiful blue world to which he was returning is part of a living system, harmonious and whole—and that we all participate, as he expressed it later, “in a universe of consciousness.” This he describes as the “Aha” or “Big Picture Effect” that happened when he first saw the moon, the earth and the sun together. The Aha, he suggests is when we either see something that we have taken for granted in a completely new way, or when we discover something which we did not know that we did not know. All cultures have stories of this effect, in which they describe this effect. This Aha! Or Eureka effect refers to the common human experience of suddenly understanding a previously incomprehensible problem or concept.

Like everything in the Dragon Dreaming Fractal, the Aha! Effect proceeds through four stages

1. The Aha! appears suddenly, not connected necessarily in a direct way with what went before.
2. It is the solution to a problem that proceeds completely smoothly, giving insight into something that previously was impervious or not understood.
3. There is an expression of great joy and satisfaction at the epiphany or insight that has occurred.
4. There is the insight expressed by the person experiencing the Aha! effect that the facts revealed are totally true.

The experience, however, happens so rapidly that all four stages are experienced as a single seamless event. The first stage of the Aha is involved in the presentation of a problem or “background noise” which seems impervious to solution, despite being examined from all possible angles. This first state is usually due to a fixation upon the nature of what is known already, and the Aha effect happens with a suddenness of a break outside of the “box” of what is already known, and seeing “the big picture” that Mitchell describes. Aha! effects also often come as a sudden moment of realization, connecting two experiences that previously were disconnected, where an individual recognizes that they need to make a change or move forward in life. Research from 1979 on the “Aha!”

effect has shown that “Aha!” effects maximise memory retention. They slow the forgetting curve. Discovery for oneself through an “Aha!” will help prevent the loss of what is taught, and fix it in long term memory.

Magnetic resonance imaging has shown the “Aha” effect comes from activity in the front right hand hemisphere of the brain in the anterior (front) superior temporal gyrus, of the brain, unlike conventional problems solving which seems to be a left brain activity. In Dragon Dreaming terms, Aha is coming from the Dreaming Quadrant, when information gathered suddenly shifts to present a new picture. The superior temporal gyrus has been discovered to be an important structure in the pathway consisting of the amygdale, which processes emotions, and the prefrontal cortex, where rational thought occurs. It has also been found that much unconscious processing often takes place while a person is asleep, and there are many cases of scientific discoveries coming to people in their dreams. The discovery of the Benzene Ring in organic chemistry came to Freidrick Kekule when dreaming, like in Dragon Dreaming, of a snake eating its own tail, and many scientists have made use of brief naps in the midst of being confronted by problems, to help find a solution.

Electro-Encephalogram studies confirm that people who have many “Aha!” moments tend to show beta and gamma wave activity in the front right hemisphere of the brain and low alpha activity, indicating a wider visual focus than those who have fewer “Aha!” moments. By comparison the people with lower “Aha!” insights show most activity in the left hemisphere and also show high alpha rhythms, and beta occipital activity, indicating a suppression of visual activity in their problem solving methodology. Other studies show that there is a reduced electrical effect in the anterior cingulated cortex, a deep collar of the brain that surrounds the corpus callosum that connects the hemispheres, which seems to indicate the breaking of a mental set. Subsequently there is activity in the right hand hippocampus, that part of the brain associated with connecting previously unconnected nodes and in fixing short term memory into long term memory, typical of the “Aha!” effect. The brain patterns in “aha! moments” are thus similar to the state observed whilst dreaming.

Edgar Mitchell, in his Institute of Noetic Sciences, suggests that the quantum entanglement discovered by Aspen carries information that is coherent and information rich. We are thus always and forever interconnected in ways in which we are ignorant. Nature, through giving us the “Aha” experience, is accelerating the evolution of our deepest learning process.

Research shows that when you discover something you don't “know you don't know” you often have a sense that you know that it is right and exactly right just before you get the breakthrough. In Dragon Dreaming in creating projects it should always be that you aim to maximise the “aha! moments”.

Such liberation of creativity always needs focussing on a problem first, then letting go of it.

When do aha! moments happen? People have different views: They range as follows

- unexpected interruptions,
- night-time thoughts,
- after meditation,
- journaling,
- listening to music,
- worship meetings,
- going for walks,
- shamanistic rituals,
- relationship with psychotropic entheogens (eg.cannabis),
- cycling,
- imagination realm in movement,
- when holding the belief that I am worthy,
- walking,
- at night.

Evidence shows that altered states of consciousness are always important in having “aha! moments”. Also, in “Aha moments” there is a need for time. They cannot be hastened. This is why in Dragon Dreaming I frequently state you cannot hasten the blossoming of a rose. I encourage people to explore their own processes for cultivating “Aha’s”, and giving themselves opportunity to experience more of these.

FRAMEWORK FOR MAXIMISING CREATIVITY

Today life is getting faster. Cancers, auto-immune diseases, allergies, infertility and stress related illnesses are all symptoms of change too fast to cope with. (This is one reason why there is such an increase in extinctions.) We think we are living in the most creative time in history but in fact the most creative time in history over the last 300 years (by patents taken out per 1,000) was in the period from 1880 - 1900. Time was slower then and people had more leisure for creativity. Rapidity of action leads to preformatted forms of behaviour, and lowers trust and increases fears.

Research clearly shows that lack of trust and fear of judgement always leads to conservative behaviours of “business as usual”, reverting to habitual patterns of behaviour and a lack of play, minimising creativity.

But Aha’s are infectious and contagious. Share Aha’s and they will increase. Friendship increases play, it builds a sense of trust, it gives us allowance to create risks and increases creativity on which Aha’s depend. Such creativity is linked to a feeling of relaxation and comfort.

This is why playfulness is important. It helps us think better and makes us more satisfied when we do. The research shows the following

- Environmental factors are important in maximising creative play. This is why I always stress the importance of *dralha*.
- Speed cuts down on playfulness, but tension of lack of perceived time may force people out of the familiar “business as usual” and can create novelty.

- Children are more engaged with open possibility, which is the beginning of exploratory play. We need to cultivate the beginner's "childlike" mind to maximise playful creativity.
- Critical self-editing and internal criticism reduce creativity. Evidence shows when children play they do not self-edit. Indeed the egotistical self is absent.

How can we measure creativity? There is the 30 circles test. People have a minute to adapt a circle into as many things that they can. This is a useful exercise to try with groups to find what circumstances lead to maximised creativity in a group. The people who perform least well at such creativity exercises are those who are most self-critical. Self editing is not playful. Children in play don't self edit.

In Dragon Dreaming we often need to shock people out of adult un-playful ways of thinking. We say, if it isn't playful it isn't sustainable. This is why there is such an important role for brainstorming rules, avoiding judgement, going for quantity, reducing conversation and discussion, and giving impossible time goals to achieve tasks - as these are all rules for maximising creativity.

Play is not anarchy. It is based on co-negotiation. In Dragon Dreaming this is what happens in the Dream Circle where the right and left brains are in connection. As we transition out of play, into planning people move from an equally active right brain into operating more in the left hemisphere of our brain. This is why even planning needs to become playful.

Elizabeth Gilbert the author of *"Eat, Pray, Love"* believes genius and creativity is a generative mode. She suggests that a solution selection mode leads both to divergence and convergence.

Unfortunately in the modern world the creative genius is seen as a deviant, and have a reputation for being alcoholic manic depressives, associated with mental instability, associated with suicide, people who are undone by their creative gifts. Creativity is believed to come from nature, from nurture or from nightmares. Great creativity linked to psychosis or the "absent mindedness" of scientists.

This is very different from the ancient world where it was believed that creativity came from a divine unknowable source. The Greeks called it their creative daemon (which in the Orthodox Christian reaction to Gnostic belief) was "demonised". The Roman idea was a "genius", living in the walls of a space who invisibly assisted us in our creativity. It was considered that the daemon or the genius could be "breathed" into our soul, through "inspiration". "Enthusiasm" was to be filled within such an infinite "breath" of a God. The ancient artist was protected from "narcissism" and egotistical self-absorption by this living "genius". The European Renaissance changed all this renaissance humanism placed human beings in the centre of the universe. Creativity it was believed, came from the self. Artists now were seen as "being a genius" rather than "having a genius". These beliefs warp and distort our relationship to creativity and creates fear and performance anxiety.

How do we rebuild the connection between humans and creativity. There is a maddening capriciousness of the creative project - it is downright paranormal. Poets and musicians can feel it - a thunderous train of air coming - they have to then create fast so that the creative impulse can be collected.

Ideas come from a source we cannot explain. Tom Waite, the musician, explains it as literal "inspiration". There is a need to enable the genius to be a bizarre collaboration that comes from something that was not quite me.

Centuries ago in Berber North Africa, something would happen and people would gather to see transcendent performance, in which a dancer would not appear human, lit up and be on fire with divinity. They would call "Allah, Allah" - as this was a manifestation of God. This was the origin of the "whirling dervishes" of Mevlevi Jallaladin Rumi. Then the Muslim Moors invaded Spain, and the cry was changed to "Ole Ole". The Bravo was a glimpse of God. The most extraordinary aspects of life don't come from you but are loaned to you. They come through you from the unknown. A door opens in our soul to temporarily allow us to see what could not be glimpsed before.

Thus we need not to be afraid of creative genius- we need merely to do the best you can, and the divine genius comes, "ole"; but "ole" to you nonetheless to have the human love and stubbornness to keep showing up. Perfection and performance anxiety is the enemy of the good, and practice of the good will lead eventually to greatness in your projects.

This is a process which according to Amy Tan leads us to get "nothing out of something", similar to the creation of the universe itself. Maximising creativity leads us into big questions - why do things happen?, how do things happen?, and how do we make things happen? Creativity is always linked to pattern recognition. It is the recognition of a pattern where one could not be seen before which leads to the "Aha" moment.

Catriona Blanke, the first Dragon Dreaming apprentice, has suggested that there is a missing step in Dragon Dreaming associated right at the beginning, even before Awareness and Motivation. She suggests that it is "Devotion", a feminine presentiment much deeper and more powerful than male "Commitment". Devotion is a deeper feeling of ambiguity, linked to intentionality and responsibility.

Devotion opens us up to hints and clues which become meaningful and then need a focus, that to which we become devoted to. In this creativity you are getting help from the universe, making you notice it. "Why am I here?" "What is the meaning of my life?" "What is my place in the universe?"

True creativity seems to be linked always with the arrival of luck, of serendipity, of the accidental. How do we create something out of nothing? It comes from mysterious forces, from the notion of what it is. Uncertainty in everything creates a doorway for something new. Imagination creates an ability to know compassion. Feeling is central.

Silvano Arieti believes creativity can be cultivated. In fact his suggestions can be easily fitted into the Dragon Dreaming framework. Like many who write on such matters, he too forgets the importance of the Celebration processes.

DREAMING

Awareness

- Inactivity and Idleness
- Aloneness
- Daydreaming

Motivation

- Alertness
- Relaxed vigilance - best way of courting a breakthrough

Gathering Information

- Fantasy - allows the mind to reach beyond the limits of immediate situation
- Remembered trauma (inner replay), Feeling the pain of the world

PLANNING

Considering Alternatives

- Free-thinking (suspension of control)
- Being in a state of “similarities catching”

Design Strategies

- Avoid Limitation of creativity - if one is prematurely practical
- Disciplined production

Testing and Trialling

- Vulnerability and Gullibility (letting down defenses)

DOING

Implementation

- Feel first then create

Management and Administration

- Need for disciplined followthrough.

Monitoring Progress

- Organise rapid and continuous feedback at every stage

THE NEUROLOGY OF AWARENESS

Gamma Waves: Neurologically consciousness seems linked to the Gamma band of brain activity of between 30-70 Herz, which has been shown by Christof von der Malsburg and Wolf Singer, to be able to link activities of different parts of the brain into a unified experience. It is thus closely linked to cognitive activity. This “binding problem” of

combination of different experiences into one consistent consciousness is different from the “binding problem” of separation, which, for instance is the way in which a blue square is seen and recognised as a different object than a yellow circle.

Beta Waves: In Dragon Dreaming, the milling process aims to encourage people to become aware of these internal mental states. Low amplitude Beta waves of 12.5-16 Herz are multiple and varying frequencies and are often associated with active, busy, or anxious thinking and active concentration. They are associated with the active awareness of travelling to come to the workshop.

Alpha Waves: By comparison the alpha wave, of relaxed wakefulness, is associated with the occipital lobe at the rear of the brain and reaches its clearest expression in the 8-10 Herz range when the eyes are closed. This represents the activity of the visual cortex in an idle state after about 3 years old, playing an active role in network coordination and communication. Such alpha wave activity, when located in the central frontal region of the brain is associated with dreaming REM sleep. It is also found in biofeedback research and it has been linked to the state of Pinakarri, in Dragon Dreaming. Zen-trained meditation masters produce noticeably more alpha waves during meditation. It is closely related to the reduction of stressful combative situations and to the achievement of situations of calmness and tranquillity. It is found in the state of consciousness that reflects the guided meditation across multiple generations at the end of the milling process.

Mu waves, which are associated with alpha-like activity in the sensory-motor cortex are closely associated with mirror neuronal activity in these areas. This mirror neuronal system acts both when an animal acts and when the animal observes the same action performed by another, and is important for learning new skills by imitation, helping us both with language skills and to understand the actions and intentions of others. Marco Iacoboni has also shown that mirror neurons are the neural basis of the human capacity for emotions such as empathy and compassion. Leonardo Fogassi showed that mirror neurones furnish a neural basis for predicting another individual’s subsequent actions and inferring intention. Many researchers independently suggest a connection with empathy. Mirror neurones (in the anterior insula, the anterior cingulate cortex and inferior frontal cortex) for instance are active when people experience an emotion (disgust, happiness, pain, etc.) and also when they see another person experiencing such emotion. Mirror neurones also seem linked to self awareness, as they can be turned ‘inward’—as it were—to create second-order representations or meta-representations of your own earlier brain processes. This could be the neural basis of introspection, and of the reciprocity of self awareness and other awareness.

In language acquisition it seems that human language evolved from a gesture performance/understanding system implemented in mirror neurons in the Broca area of the brain. Mimicry is important for language learning and mirror neurons have the potential to provide a mechanism for action-understanding, imitation-learning, and the simulation of other people's behaviour. Such Mu wave activity is found in the milling process when people share in pairs the results of successful and unsuccessful projects. The conviviality and rapid easing of any interpersonal tensions in new relationships

between what were previously perfect strangers, is a characteristic of the Mu waves associated with mirror neurones.

Theta Waves are rhythms are found in the 4-6 Hz frequency range and seem to be associated with the intention to move, and are associated with changes in the state of the brain, prior to awareness of the intention. They occur in two different types of hippocampus activity, which are probably not related despite their apparent similar appearance, one being found on the edge of REM sleep and the second associated with social situations.

Delta Waves activity in the brain of between 0.5 to 2 Herz, or more broadly to 4 Herz are linked with the onset of level 3 sleep. They show greatest frequency in childhood and decline over the lifetime with greatest reductions in men over 40 years old. The Yoga Nidra state of consciousness, where despite sleep-like characteristics, the practitioner is aware and awake. The Yoga Nidra state is one in which the conventional barriers between waking, dreaming and deep sleep are lifted, revealing the lucid simultaneous operation of the conscious, subconscious and unconscious mind. The result is a single, enlightened state of consciousness and a perfectly integrated and relaxed personality, that opened deep phases of the mind, suggesting a connection with the ancient tantric practice called nyasa. Yoga Nidra states are the result of a continued daily meditation practice over a number of years.

Also associated with sleep is the K-complexes which have been suggested both to protect sleep and also to engage in information processing, as they are both an essential part of the synchronization of NREM sleep, while they also respond to both internal and external stimuli in a reactive manner. This would be consistent with a function in suppressing cortical arousal in response to stimuli that the brain needs to initially process in regard to whether it is dangerous or not.

Another suggested function is aiding the activation homeostasis of synapses and memory consolidation. The activation thresholds of cortical synapses become lowered during wakefulness as they process information, making them more responsive, and so need to be adjusted back to preserve their signal-to-noise ratio. The down-state provided by K-complexes does this by reducing the strengths of synaptic connections that occur while an individual is awake. Further, the recovery from the down-state they induce allows that "cortical firing 'reboots' in a systematic order" so that memory engrams encoded during neuronal firing can be "repeatedly practiced and thus consolidated".

Lucid Dreaming is a form of dreaming during which a person is both aware that one is dreaming, and have a degree of control over determining the direction of the imagery arising. It has been shown that there are higher amounts of beta-1 frequency band (13-19 Hz) experienced by lucid dreamers, hence there is an increased amount of activity in the parietal lobes making lucid dreaming a conscious process. Out of body experiences are sometimes induced by a prior lucid dreaming state.

It was David McLean who showed that there were three layers to our awareness; an ancient reptilian response system of automatic reflexes, an early mammalian system of programmed emotional states and a early human neocortex of higher thinking functions. Knowing this, through awareness we have the opportunity to know how do we better manage the reptilian iguana, the inner monkey, the cave man and woman, that is built into ourselves. In the absence of threat, the triune nature of the human brain leads to a

ground state. The reptilian brain when not stimulated by stress of the automatic reflexes produces a calm state. The emotional monkey shows contentment and the neo cortex which is based upon human attachment shows caring. This is the background state of being in humans. But trigger states of freeze, flight or fight in order to secure survival are still present, but can, through training and awareness be over-ridden by the neocortex. But when we live in a nuclear armed world, we tend to respond in these ancient directions. Neurones that fire together, wire together. In this way our brains tend to be non-stick Teflon for positive experiences but highly sticking Velcro for negative experiences. Negative events have impact, even though positive events are more common. In the milling process at the start of Dragon Dreaming, we see these processes in action. When asked to share a positive experience of a project people may take 3 minutes, but when asked to share a negative experience they will take 5-6 minutes. Negative experiences, as they say, may be hell to live at the time, but they make for the most interesting stories afterwards. It is also interesting to see the responsive situation afterwards. After sharing a positive experience, people respond with smiles and signs of mutual recognition afterwards as they circle again. After having shared the negative experiences, people are more thoughtful, more reflective and less connected with the others as they circulate. Our automatic behaviour, programmed into us genetically, epigenetically, behaviourally and culturally is a win-lose game. We incline in a negative direction and our negative feelings. It takes 11 - 20 seconds to take in a good experience from short term memory to long term memory as powerfully as you take in a negative experience in milliseconds. The 3 F stress response of freeze, flight or fight is activated explosively in the brain, with the implicit sympathetic nervous system. It takes a reverse programming of the parasympathetic nervous system to take control of it in a win-win direction.

The enemy is not out there, it is also in here, the hardwired inner behaviour of our evolutionary heritage is causing us to behave in certain ways. But the situation is not impossible. Our brain also has solutions to the brain's problems. It has capacities to calm and centre as much as it has capacities to react on a hard wired centre of freeze, flight and fight. The latest research shows that as the brain changes so the mind also changes, and as our mind changes so does our brain.

Understanding neurology gives us the chance of paying attention to how your brain pays attention. This is the source of awareness. The main driver of the evolution of the human brain over the last 3 million years, and possibly over the last 50 million years is the force of love, socially defined. Dealing with challenging material - is to bring to mind people who care about you. If we want to help people become more empathic, it helps increase the neural substrate increases. There is no self in the brain, the sense of self is an emergent and distributed in the brain. It arises and passes away. There is no unified and independent owner of the "self" - this realisation allows us not to take ourselves so seriously, and adopt differences in a playful way. Any research on adult men and women is suspect as it is not evidence of a hardwired gender differences. Male minds are more influenced by the 3Fs. The between group research on the difference men and women, are less than the within group differences. But the research shows that female brains are stronger on the attend and befriend - oxytocins levels in women are 7 times the level of average men, female minds are more buffered than men. Zen practitioners are P300 Response in EEG studies in meditation tend to react as if it were a new sound. Their

threshold of awareness is much higher. They are able to see the world more clearly. Their calmness of the truly great. Be a hammer instead of a nail, take productive action out into the world - talk to others, write a letter, it helps defeat the bias we have towards learned helplessness.

Evidence has recently come to light based on the Magnetic Resonance Imaging showing brain functioning - by blood flows registered to different parts of the brain. The Limbic system, particularly the Amygdala tends to be the source of the emotions, like Anger which are released as part of the "fight" syndrome (activated when survival is threatened). Anger is the emotion released when chimp groups fissure into two, with animosity splitting the two in half. Anger also leads to those uncontrolled physical rages associated with humans. Brain tomography studies in humans, however, show the outburst of Anger is modulated through the frontal cortex of the brain, the associative structures linked to the beginning of articulation, evaluation and association. Speech is a very powerful tool for limiting anger, angry people can be "talked down" out of their rage. Studies on pleasant emotional release (eg Happiness) also show a similar linguistic connection. Happy people are likely to communicate in ways that make others happy too. Laughter is infectious and is a form of verbal communication. Finally we find those associations of mother and child associated with baby-talk. It has been found that babies raised by mute mothers have greater difficulty learning to speak themselves by those verbally articulate mothers who never cease to engage their child in semi-meaningless social banter. In fact it has been shown that babies not spoken to in fact fail to gain weight, and are more anxious than are those in which social communication is a part of their lives from the first. These functions are not conceptual, but social - giving the child a sense of belonging, of being included and of learning socially appropriate from socially inappropriate behaviours.

Finally we find the four main assertions of the new model presented here are:

- (1) Right hemisphere functions guided human behaviour only before the emergence of left hemisphere language specialization.
- (2) Hemispheric specialization and lateralization of function could evolve only after an increase in size of the corpus callosum and the number of small axon fibres, which slowed inter-hemispheric transmission times and effectively increased within hemisphere processing.
- (3) Left hemisphere language specialization (characterized by analytic, grammatical, linear language) evolved only after environmental conditions allowed for changes in the quality of infant care-giving.
- (4) The evolution of self-awareness occurred simultaneously with the increase in left hemisphere language sophistication.

Maslows Theory of Self Actualisation.

Abraham Maslow found that these individuals were very accepting of themselves and of their life circumstances; were focused on finding solutions to cultural problems rather than to personal problems; were open to others' opinions and ideas; had strong senses of privacy, autonomy, human values and appreciation of life; and a few intimate friendships rather than many superficial ones. He also believed that each of these people had somehow managed to find their core-nature that is unique to them, and is one of the true goals of life.

For example a self-actualizer according to Maslow is a person who is living creatively and fully using his or her potentials. In his studies, Maslow found that self-actualizers share similarities. Whether famous or unknown, educated or not, rich or poor, self-actualizers tend to fit the following profile^{vi}.

- *Efficient perceptions of reality.* Self-actualizers are able to judge situations correctly and honestly. They are very sensitive to the fake and dishonest, and are free to see reality 'as it is'.
- *Comfortable acceptance of self, others, nature.* Self-actualizers accept their own human nature with all its flaws. The shortcomings of others and the contradictions of the human condition are accepted with humor and tolerance.
- *Spontaneity.* Maslow's subjects extended their creativity into everyday activities. Actualizers tend to be unusually alive, engaged, and spontaneous.
- *Task centering.* Most of Maslow's subjects had a mission to fulfill in life or some task or problem 'beyond' themselves (instead of outside of themselves) to pursue. Humanitarians such as Albert Schweitzer and Mother Teresa are considered to have possessed this quality.
- *Autonomy.* Self-actualizers are free from reliance on external authorities or other people. They tend to be resourceful and independent.
- *Continued freshness of appreciation.* The self-actualizer seems to constantly renew appreciation of life's basic goods. A sunset or a flower will be experienced as intensely time after time as it was at first. There is an "innocence of vision", like that of an artist or child.
- *Fellowship with humanity.* Maslow's subjects felt a deep identification with others and the human situation in general.
- *Profound interpersonal relationships.* The interpersonal relationships of self-actualizers are marked by deep loving bonds.
- *Comfort with solitude.* Despite their satisfying relationships with others, self-actualizing persons value solitude and are comfortable being alone.
- *Non-hostile sense of humor.* This refers to the wonderful capacity to laugh at oneself. It also describes the kind of humor a man like Abraham Lincoln had. Lincoln probably never made a joke that hurt anybody. His wry comments were gentle proddings of human shortcomings.
- *Peak experiences.* All of Maslow's subjects reported the frequent occurrence of peak experience (temporary moments of self-actualization). These occasions were marked by feelings of ecstasy, harmony, and deep meaning. Self-actualizers reported feeling at one with the universe, stronger and calmer than ever before, filled with light, beautiful and good, and so forth.

In summary, self-actualizers feel finally themselves, safe, not anxious, accepted, loved, loving, and alive, certainly living a fulfilling life.

Fritz Perls, one of the founders of Gestalt Therapy, criticized Maslow's theory of the self-actualised person saying that what people were doing was actualising a self-concept, rather than being in the process of self-actualising. They turned self-actualisation into a state, a thing, rather than seeing it as a process of flow.

CONCLUSION - UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS OF FLOW

The Buddhist neurologist Dr Rick Hanson shows that

“We can hold back our contributions to the world, including love, just as much as we can muzzle or repress sorrow or anger. But contribution needs to flow; it stagnates and gets stinky if it doesn't. Thwarted contribution is the source of much unhappiness. For example, the wound of loneliness and heartache is about not having others to *give to* as much as not having others to get from. And one of the major issues with adolescence in technological cultures is that there are few opportunities for teenagers to make a real difference, to *matter* and feel a sense of earned worth.

He quotes Nkosi Johnson -- a South African boy born with HIV who became a national voice for children with AIDS before dying at about age 12 - who said: "Do all you can, with what you have, in the time you have, in the place where you are."

Isabel Allende, the famous author, is convinced that a passionate heart is what drives creativity, taking risks. But risk taking is not enough. In *Dragon Dreaming* I often speak of the fact that “things”, the “objects” we see are not separate, unique or individual, but are rather temporary nodes in a process of flow; a flow of matter and energy, of entropy (or chaos) and information. True creativity is also linked to what has been called a “flow” state. I often quote Al Gore who stated an African proverb that if we seek to go fast we must go alone, but if we must go far we must go together. Our current world situation is one which needs us to both, simultaneously. But how is this possible? I explain that it requires two things; one is that we must be 100% a participant in the engagement of the activity. The second is that we need to remove ourselves, to be 100% an observer of what is happening, and we need to do both at the same time.

The problem is that when we are engaged in win-lose activity, we disconnect ourselves - from the activity, from the worlds, from the others, and most importantly from ourselves. The condemning judgemental interior voice takes over, we lose trust in ourselves, the others and the world, and fear arises. But in the flow participation and observation are 100% integrated and we become one and whole. The difference between theory and practice disappears and we become one with our world.

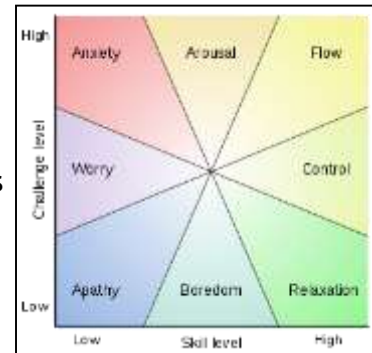
Charlene Blinz and Meg Lindstrom^{vii} suggest that “*Flow is a natural effortless unfolding of our life that moves us to wholeness and harmony*”

They suggest we experience flow when

- Things fall into place, obstacles melt away, and whatever is necessary - money, time, work, people, opportunities - appear needed.
- We find ourselves at the right place at the right time doing the right thing
- Perfect timing smoothes the way in long term and every day logistics

- Life unfolds as a dynamic process
- Events and actions mesh together in a coherent pattern of deep harmony and underlying order
- Outside events link up with your inner thoughts and feelings, giving you a sense of participating in the universe.

Such states of “flow” are a reflection not of pathology or lack, but are in fact the highest creative state to which we humans are capable. Csikszentmihalyi^{viii}, a psychologist at the University of Chicago, has probably been the greatest student of the state of “flow” suggests that there are four key features that characterize this creative “flow”.



1. The first is an intense and focused absorption that makes you lose all sense of time.
2. The second is what is known as autotellicity, the sense that the activity you are engaged in is rewarding for its own sake.
3. The third is finding the "sweet spot", a feeling that your skills are perfectly matched to the task at hand, leaving you neither frustrated nor bored.
4. And finally, flow is characterized by automaticity, the sense that "the piano is playing itself", for example.

Csikszentmihalyi found that the most skilled players when in the “flow state” showed less activity in the prefrontal cortex, which is typically associated with higher cognitive processes such as working memory and verbalization. That may seem counter-intuitive, but silencing self-critical thoughts might allow more automatic processes to take hold, which would in turn produce that effortless feeling of flow.

Chris Berka^{ix} for example looked at the brain waves of Olympic archers and professional golfers. A few seconds before the archers fired off an arrow or the golfers hit the ball, the team spotted a small increase in what's known as the alpha band, one of the frequencies that arises from the electrical noise of all the brain's neurons. This surge in alpha waves, Berka says, is associated with reduced activation of the cortex, and is always more obvious in experts than in novices. "We think this represents focused attention on the target, while other sensory inputs are suppressed," says Berka. She found that these mental changes are accompanied by slower breathing and a lower pulse rate - as you might expect from relaxed concentration.

Gabriele Wulf a kinaesthesiologist at the University of Nevada and her colleagues found that they could quickly improve a person's abilities by asking them to focus their attention on an external point away from their body. Aspiring skiers who were asked to do slalom-type movements on a simulator, for example, learned faster if they focused on a marked spot ahead of them. Golfers who focused on the swing of the club were about 20 per cent more accurate than those who focused on their own arms. Wulf's findings fit well with the idea that flow - and better learning - comes when you turn off conscious analytic thought. "When you have an external focus, you achieve a more automatic type of control," she says. "You don't think about what you are doing, you just focus on the outcome." Sacred Psychologist Jean Houston, when we bought her to Western Australia practiced getting

participants in her workshop to focus upon one step ahead of themselves in walking. From personal experience, I found the days that I practiced this skill were significantly more positive than the days I forgot. The Vietnamese Zen Buddhist, Thich Nhat Hanh teaches a walking meditation that has some of the same properties and has equally significant outcomes on one's state of mind.

Blintz and Lindstrom suggest that feelings of synchronicity are a symptom of the flow state. They have a test you can do to see if such synchronicity plays a role in an individual's life. Answer the following questions and you will see what part synchronicity plays in your daily life.

How much synchronicity do you have in your life

- Have you ever thought of telephoning someone, only to have that person telephone before you could get it in?
- Have you ever been late to get somewhere but found the way unexpectedly opens in front of you so you arrive just in time?
- Has the right amount of money shown up from an unexpected source just when you have needed it?
- Has a toll lane or cash register ever opened up just as you needed it?
- When you are in a hurry, have you ever suddenly found parking just where you needed it?
- In a desperate search for some information or item you really need, has it amazingly shown up in some unexpected way?
- Have you run into friends in an unlikely, distant or out of the way place?
- Has a lost object been returned to you in an unexpected and unusual way?
- Has a series of coincidences happened to you that seem to be pointing in an unusual particular direction?
- Have you ever been at the right time and place to rescue someone, or have you ever rescued a stranger who just happened to be there?
- Have you run into obstacle after obstacle only to find later it was a very good thing not to continue in that you not continue in that direction?
- Have you ever thought of a question only to have it answered on the radio or by people talking nearby before you could ask it?
- Have you found that meaningful coincidences usually validate the direction you are going in?

Score total _____

If your score is between the following numbers, they suggest

- 0-4 You are a flow snoozer, not yet awake to the magic that surrounds you
- 5-8 You are a flow browser, starting to notice something interesting going on
- 9-12 You are a flow seeker, following signs and paying attention
- 13 + You are a flow master, you are ready to share with others your way of living.

They state that there are nine Personal Attributes that Create Flow Power

1. Honesty versus Dishonesty
2. Openness versus Closedness
3. Receptiveness versus Unresponsive

4. Positivity versus Negativity
5. Trusting versus Suspicious
6. Courageous versus Fearful
7. Passionate versus Indifferent
8. Commitment versus Hesitancy
9. Immediacy versus Procrastination

What creates flow here it would seem is the avoidance of the situation of Structural Disempowerment which is found in organizational contexts where win-lose games are being played. Flow would seem to be the source of win-win-win.

To be in the flow it would seem that we need to be

1. Completely involved in what we are doing - focussed, concentrated.
2. In a sense of ecstasy - being outside everyday reality
3. Having a great inner clarity - knowing what needs to be done and how well we are doing.
4. Knowing that the activity is doable - that our skills are adequate to the task.
5. Have a sense of serenity - no worries about oneself, and a feeling of growing beyond the boundaries of the ego.
6. In timelessness - thoroughly focussed on the present, hours seem to pass by in minutes.
7. Have intrinsic motivation - whatever produces the flow becomes its own reward.

The flow happens when arousal is where you are pushed beyond your comfort zone, and you improve your skills. It is a state of positive psychology - centred in the things that make life worth living, not just to make normal. In the flow -

1. Pleasure is the first contribution to happiness
2. Engagement is the feeling you are doing something that expresses who you are and is worth doing.
3. Meaning - you feel that what you are doing connects you to something greater than yourself. Feeling you are a part of the cosmos.

Overlapping of all three gives a good life. All three contribute to the prediction for a happy life. Pleasure is the least predictive, engagement is the most predictive of such a life.

Rules of engagement show that the easier it is the more enjoyment you get, when you are being forced to do something. Conventional psychology shows this is the curve that people don't care about.

When we are in the flow we have a built in enjoyment in extending ourselves, is one of the fundamental human characteristic is dissatisfaction with the status quo. This is the natural state of human adaptation to the environment. Necessity to comply with external rules and demands.

Artists describe being carried away by the experience, when they are being examples of what they have been doing. What distinguishes the truly creative person from those that are good, is that the creative person discovers the challenge of the problem, where as those that are good, try to solve the problem. It is a result of a judgement. The truly

creative people did not bring the problem to the canvas. They bring the experience of the challenge. It was a result of the process of engagement with experience of the world.

Here it is the importance of shaping the contents of our consciousness for optimal experience, the practice of being able to do this. A person can make himself happy by changing the consciousness of his mind. Shortcuts will not do the trick. Complete focus is the first step. Action and awareness merge.

Conventional school-based learning is tricking people to give back the information you have put in to them and that they were not interested in the first place. But small pre-school children are informavores, they have an exuberent interest in learning, they naturally get in the flow. This process, however is destroyed once they go to school, and become part of the win-lose, success and failure model. In school they cannot follow their interests, they are not in control of the process. They are robbed of the natural joy of flow learning. In a flow the experience becomes autotellic, an end in itself, completely self generating. There is complete freedom from the fear of failure. Self consciousness disappears

The flow is a state of ecstasy. Ecstasy originally meant stepping outside or besides yourself, the sense of being egoless. We know of the ecstasies of other civilizations, they were considered to be a moment of entering a different reality, where Identity disappears from consciousness and separate existence is temporarily suspended. It has been said that 10,000 hours of experience are necessary to be able to achieve the state of mastery and be able to change something in a way that was there before through a spontaneous flow, but flow happens for normal people too. In the flow state we become time travellers as ones sense of the objective flow of time becomes distorted from normal reality. In the flow it is as if time stops, but in exiting the flow we can be surprised to find hours have passed like minutes.

Listening to practitioners who have achieved the flow state tells us much about its character. The statements below are identical to how Einstein described his state when he imaged the forces of relativity or when other great scientists make their discoveries. For example

- A symphony conductor stated - *“You are in an ecstatic state to the point that you feel as though you almost don’t exist. I have experienced this time and again. My hand seems devoid of myself, and I have nothing to do with what is happening. I just sit there watching in a state of awe and wonderment. And [the music] just flows out of itself.”*
- A poet wrote - *“Its like opening a door that is in the middle of nowhere and all you have to do is turn the handle and let yourself sink into it. You can’t particularly force yourself through it. You just have to float. If there is any gravitational pull, its from the outside world trying to keep you back from the door.”*
- An Olympic Figure-Skater explained *“It was just one of these programs that clicked. I mean everything went right, everything felt good... Its just such a rush, like you*

could feel it could go on and in and on, like you don't want to stop yourself because it is going so well. Its almost as though you don't have to think, its like everything goes automatically without thinking... it's like you are on automatic pilot, so you don't have any thoughts. You hear the music but you're not aware that you're hearing it, because it's a part of it all"

- Successful people too often have a flow experience. Norman Augustine - former CEO of Lockheed Martin said of his flow experience, *"I've always wanted to be successful. My definition of being successful is contributing something to the world... and being happy when doing it... You have to enjoy what you are doing. You won't be very good if you don't. You have to feel you are contributing something worthwhile... If either of these ingredients are missing, there's probably some lack of meaning in your work."*
- Anita Roddick, founder of the Body Shop, famous for being one of the most socially and environmentally aware businesses on the planet stated of the flowm *"Look for your passion. What makes you excited? What turns you on?... Go towards companies you really like, really admire... What do you admire about them? Spend if you can an internship there, or just knock on the door and say: 'Hey, can I work here for cheap?'... Find organisations that move your spirit if you can. Work alongside them... And have fun. There is so much fun to be had... When you spend 95% of your life in a work environment, it can't be dour"*
- Masaru Ibuka in describing the purposes he used in the Incorporation of Sony, wanted a state of flow where he was able *"To establish a place where engineers can feel the joy of technological innovation, be aware of their mission to society, and work to their heart's content."*
- An artist describes *"You are right in the work, you lose your sense of time, you are completely enraptured, you are completely caught up in what you are doing... there is no future or past, its just an unending present in which you are making meaning."*
- The flow experience for a student when doing research described *"I can sit in front of a microscope for three or four hours at a time, just looking at the material and analysing it... It can be very disconcerting for other people in the degree to which I can concentrate on something and not pay too much attention to what is going on around me."*
- A mountain climber stated - *"You are so involved about what you are doing, you aren't thinking about yourself as separate from the immediate activity. You are no longer a participant observer, only a participant. You are moving in harmony with something else you are a part of"*
- An Olympic Bicyclist said, *"You feel like... there's nothing that will be able to stop you or get in your way. And you're ready to tackle anything, and you don't fear any possibility happening, and its just exhilarating"*.

- A brain surgeon explained “*You are not aware of your body except your hands... not aware of self or personal problems... If involved, you are not aware of your aching feet, not aware of self.*”
- A ballet dancer explained “*Two things happen... After its passed, [time] seems to have passed really fast. I see it is one o'clock in the morning and I say, ‘Ah-ha just a few minutes ago it was eight o’clock’ But then while I am dancing ... it seems to have been much longer than it really was.*’
- For a music teacher she stated “*Do it for the satisfaction it gives... This is what I tell my students. Don’t do it to make money, don’t expect fame or a pat on the back, don’t expect a damn thing... Do it because you have it.*”

Applying this to Dragon Dreaming we can see the following process of cultivating the flow in Dragon Dreaming

A. Dreaming: γνώθι σεαυτόν: *Gnothi Saue-ton* = Knowing Yourself

- Cultivate awareness
- Accept yourself and others as they are
- Practice *Pinakarri* - create silence in your life
- Practice capturing and working with your dreams

B. Planning: μηδέν άγαν: *Mēdén ágan* = Nothing in excess. Finding a supportive group - Inner work

- Express authentically who you really are
- Follow your Dream, refine your intuition
- Practice mindfulness - observe the flow
- Take risks - make yourself vulnerable

C. Doing: Outer action

- Create supportive places, create *dralha*
- Do 100% of what you know to do and trust
- Don’t procrastinate - finish things and move on
- Break with old reality

D. Celebration: Connect with others and Cultivate Oneness with the greater whole

- Actively appreciate yourself and others
- Express gratitude and thankfulness at every opportunity
- Give of yourself unstintingly
- Practice random acts of kindness and create senseless beauty

How to build the flow experience?

1. Clear goals in an immediate fashion.
2. Immediate feedback in action.
3. Balance between challenge and skills.

In a flow there is a reversal in our time of the role of human and the divine. Originally it was the gods who were the creators and humans were seen as puny victims and playthings of divine agents beyond their understanding or control. As a result of the second great

turning, the recent scientific and technological revolutions, it is human creativity of which we are now most aware, and the gods are now seen as imaginary. Before, with Yahweh or Shiva, the world was seen as being suspended in balance between a god's wrath and his mercy. Today, our future continued existence is seen in balance between human stupidity and human understanding, a race as H.G.Wells long ago remarked is a race between our education and catastrophe.

Thus creativity thus depends upon a number of things.

1. It depends upon a cultural receptivity for the new idea, the product or discovery. A culture or sub-culture that can sort and select the truly creative from those that while new do not add to, but rather subtract from the overall survival of the human species.
2. It depends upon the creative process of individuals, who have the time, leisure and creative support to gather the information and consider the alternatives that the information seems to present.
3. It depends upon the availability of attention, a concentration of focus upon a limited range of phenomena, a situation which allows attention to be placed upon the world beyond the limits demanded for sheer survival.

In conclusion, if you truly are interested in maximising creativity, synchronicity and Aha's in your life, keep and maintain a log, journal or notebook to note synchronicities, Aha's and dreams that happen in your life.

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^{viii} Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1988), "[The flow experience and its significance for human psychology](#)", in Csikszentmihalyi, M., *Optimal experience: psychological studies of flow in consciousness*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, pp. 15-35,

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