



Fascism is on the rise. Beware assumptions.

The Fourth Leg: Creativity

Creativity is the most important tool. It can't be taught, but you can learn it.

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“All phenomena are real in some sense, unreal in some sense, meaningless in some sense, real and meaningless in some sense, unreal and meaningless in some sense, and real and unreal and meaningless in some sense.”

— **Robert Anton Wilson**, futurist and psychologist

The Three and One More

We recognize three foundational areas in counseling, but there is an overlooked fourth. The three areas are, first, conscious reason and reflection. Second, the things below our reasoning self that I call the subconscious. Third, one's neurology which includes one's body and awareness. We are somewhat aware of our body and mostly unconscious of our neurology, which is not the same as the subconscious.

Psychotherapy stops here. In Western culture, the mind is controlled, the body is taboo, and one's neurology—like one's emotions—are overlooked or repressed. The result is unintegrated people. Many dysfunctions reflect our inability to retain balance in response to daily stress.

The fourth angle is creativity and its three sisters: imagination, insight, and inspiration. I recognize creativity as distinct. Working as a therapist and practitioner in many fields, I see a lack of creativity. The lack is in people, not the separate disciplines.

Creativity is a thing in itself, and it's our most advanced skill. It is more difficult to be successfully creative in any field than it is to be competent. Creativity is also disruptive both to the normal process and the educational program of every field. For example, if at any point in your training you "get creative," you will inevitably stray from the standard.

What's more, most creative ideas fail most of the time, and every field discourages failure. But to be successfully creative you must embrace failure. As I tell my clients as I encourage them to be creative, "Don't expect to succeed. That's not your goal. Your goal is to envision new possibilities."

In simplistic terms, education trains us to control our intellect. Accepting a profession trains us to repress the instincts that connect us to our bodies. The pressures of social, political, and family responsibility train us to control our spirit and repress our subconscious. Creativity, to the extent it's encouraged at all, is relegated to childhood where it can do no harm to the system that are all around us.

From a biological perspective, few species have the potential to be as creative as humans. Practical creativity, otherwise known as tool making, is rare. Abstract creativity is evolutionarily unprecedented, although we can't be sure. It's hard to know what or how other animals think.

What Do You Think, or Do You?

The desire to understand rather than simply prevail is creative. It's essential if you want to understand the minds of others and your own. Lacking creative insight, people make stupid choices, like embracing populist ideas. By definition, populist ideas are ideas with the least insight.

A *New York Times* article (Montgomery 2024), polling the ebullient attitudes of Donald Trump supporters, quoted comments such as:

"We'll have peace with Trump."

"We changed the world."

"We got our country back!"

"(Trump) only has God in his mouth."

Evidence points to the opposite.

There is no better time than before January 2025 for China to invade Taiwan. It will largely appear as a tightening of the choke-hold that the CCP is putting in place, but the financial markets will react

fearfully. It will challenge our views of peace, change, and autonomy. And if you're on the fence about God, you might question that, too. I hear Warren Buffet is selling his assets; I'm selling mine too!

Logical Progress

The fallacy of logic is that it describes change. Logic is used to justify change, but such applications are a joke. Only simply mechanical things change logically, everything else is too complicated to predict.

We base deductions on what we've got, while we base inferences on what we want. Responsible decisions have to be based on deductions, which is to say evidence. Populism is based on preferences. I doubt the above supporters know the difference between them. On the other hand, the lesson of the election was that Trump opponents are no more successful in understanding change.

This is nothing new; it's been brewing for a long time. Despite repeated disasters—the fall of Rome, German fascism, and every single war—thinking for oneself continues to be discouraged. Instead, change is fostered through chaos rather than resolved direction. I interpret this as affirmation that people have not learned how to integrate creativity with thought.

Each of these four areas—with creativity being the fourth—is different in ways we rarely appreciate. By understanding each more deeply, we can create a better map of the path to a deeper appreciation of ourselves individually and collectively. We all need to be more creative.

This is a hard sell. Creative thinking is disruptive. Most people are either content with what they understand, or with how they see things now. Most people are attached to what they've achieved despite it being wholly inadequate for social growth and long-term safety. In addition to being disruptive, new ideas are usually wrong.

Exploration

Few people actively seek to change themselves. People in this small group are the explorers. They're either doing something different, or they're looking for help in finding a new way forward. If you think being an explorer means venturing off the map, then you're thinking too narrowly. We all live within the bounds of our own maps.

Society views explorers with bemused curiosity, in the same way that people are curious about traffic accidents and school yard fights. As Veteran's Day annually reminds us, we can't tell the difference between a hero and a victim. There is real truth to this, as most people who are aiming to be heroes end up being victims.

Good explorers know where they're going or, at least, they know how to survive. Good explorers rarely succeed on their first try and their failures are rarely dramatic. Spectacular exploits rarely teach you anything, aside from having the better judgment of not being there in the first place.

I learned a lot from falling off mountains, being buried in avalanches, and crashing my airplanes. Those were interesting lessons and I'd like to say I learned all there is to learn, but that's not possible. Those situations are too complicated to manage confidently. Instead, one learns to avoid them. And the best way to avoid them is by not getting close, but that's not always possible, either.

Ironically, for some people, forward is downward, which means being destructive. I have developed a certain respect for destructive people and destructive situations. As I say, you learn an awful lot very quickly in an emergency.

Being a therapist can be like being an oceanographer. I get to descend to psychic depths without having to do all the hard work that it took my client's to get there. What I learn from my clients will not be as profound as what they learn, but it's a hell of a lot safer!

All creation involves a measure of destruction, and examining what you need to destroy can be the key to creative change. This sounds more convincing when we call it "testing to destruction." You may think that only applies to automobiles and kitchen appliances, but it applies to ideas as well. Consider romantic relationships, which ones taught you the most?

Writing About Change

I write for people who are changing. If you're not, then you'll find my ideas irrelevant or cerebral. I'm not really concerned with any specific problems of yours or the world. These problems are certainly important, but they are short sighted.

Specific problems, even the big ones like climate change, are brush fires of a sort. Each requires a custom solution, and each solution only solves one problem. Putting out fires does not change the world; maybe climate change does, but not necessarily. I'm bored by problems that don't go anywhere.

We primarily live in our minds. Our mental world wraps around us so that we can't see the edges. One person might live in a very small world and think that is all there is to know. Another might live in a large world with many possibilities. Under normal circumstances, there would be no way for the small-world person to see what the large-world person sees, and the large-world person might suspect but would have difficulty confirming the limited geography of the small-world person.

The problem is that we all speak the same language. To make matters worse, we limit our language to appropriate topics and superficial descriptions. If a child could speak with an adult vocabulary and vocal force, then it would be difficult for an adult to recognize how relatively small their world is. Most of our appraisals of each other depend more on the presentations and affectations of our speech than the details of our thoughts.

I believe much of my power as a therapist arises from my breadth of experience. I didn't set out to learn broadly, I was simply continually dissatisfied with what I learned in each discipline and from each group. It was only when I started to experience other cultures and other states of mind that I felt I was starting to fit the pieces together.

Creative Thought

Most of my conversations with clients are attempts to broaden their minds, open them to new ways of thinking and feeling, and disengage them from the many dead ends of Western thought. This is why altered states are important—hypnosis, dreams, trauma, adventure, and psychedelics—as these provide new, deeply felt experiences. All of these are similar in that you cannot dismiss the feelings that arise. This is what a person learns from, expanding the realm of mind, not focusing on greater analysis.

You can be eminently reasonable and still be wrong. When it fails to broaden your understanding, reason is defective. I define mental illness as being captured by what you believe to be reasonable. If you cannot navigate chaos and find creative insight, then many of the standard categories of mental illness can take hold: depression, mania, schizophrenia, psychosis, neurosis, trauma, and their combinations.

I'm not talking about being right or making progress. Quite the opposite. Being creative consists in the ability to be wrong and still retain commitment. You are committed to a vision or a sense of self. To an idea. Something unreasonable supports creativity, and your mental health requires it.

“Reason has ceased to be a universally admired faculty and is portrayed as the enemy of mystery and ambiguity, a cold tool of desiccating logic... Reason needs to be put in its place, and if that place is not close to the center of human life then our minds are left rudderless to float this way and that on the waters of whim, emotion and the influences of others... (It's) only through the proper use of reason that we can find our way out of the quagmires in which many big issues of our time have become stuck.”

— **Julian Baggini** (2016: 1), philosopher

There is no such thing as reason devoid of whim, emotion and the influence of others. These are the foundations of what we consider reasonable. Baggini's definition of reason went out with Newtonian physics.

While predictive when it works, reason is not healthy. Your metabolism is not reasonable, it is interactive. It must cope with whatever affects it, reasonable or not. Your judgements are not built on reason, though you're full of them. You make them up. People have reasoned arguments for the most unreasonable things, just ask my schizophrenic clients. Just ask my ex wife, a bible fundamentalist, who has no trouble fitting into society.

The key failure of reason is this: it does not require consistency or commitment. There are always special conditions and exceptions that will justify anything. It is not emotion that leads to rudderlessness, it's emotional chaos. And while unbridled creativity taps into chaos, consistency and commitment allow us to rudder through it.

Just as the mechanical universe has no room for free will, the reasonable mind has no room for growth or healing. Disconnected from neurology, subconsciousness, and creativity, reason is lifeless. The more I see of life, the lower I rate the importance of reason.

References

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<https://www.mindstrengthbalance.com/schedule15>