

# CLASSICS IN

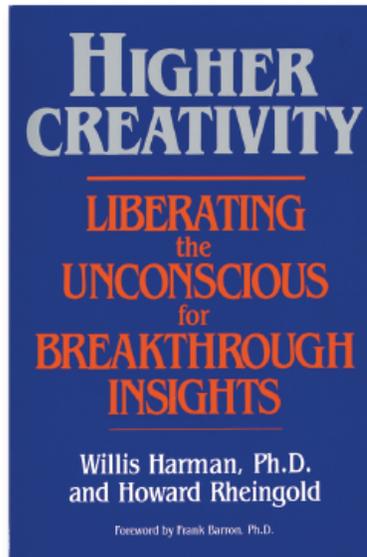
## WILLIS HARMAN AND HOWARD RHEINGOLD

THE MOST ORDINARY and the most extraordinary manifestations of our minds are not entirely unrelated phenomena, but rather the extreme ends of a continuum of creative consciousness.

At the “low” end of this spectrum the phenomena are so much an accepted part of everyday life that most of us never stop to think about the mysterious power behind some of our most ordinary mental activities. For example, you are asleep, and although an assortment of familiar city noises occur during the night, you continue to sleep peacefully. Then you are jolted awake by one quiet sound that doesn’t fit—perhaps it is the squeaking hinge of a door that normally remains shut. You sit up in bed, feeling slightly alarmed, but you aren’t entirely sure why you are alarmed until the door squeaks again and your conscious sense of hearing tunes in to it. You get up, close the door, and return to bed. Within seconds, you fall asleep.

The mystery begins when you start to wonder why that particular sound happened to register in your consciousness while the much louder sound of the bus that passes under your window every half hour never wakes you. What is the “other part of your mind” that watches over you and remains conscious of the environment even when ordinary consciousness is extinguished in sleep?

Now consider another kind of experience, one that might at first appear to be in a wholly different dimension from the squeaky door. There is a certain state of heightened awareness, an experience of intense “breakthrough” insight that, although it is a less common occurrence, happens to us all at one time or another. It is a state in which the floodgates of thought seem suddenly thrown open and profound ideas and images, often solutions to our deepest problems—questions about life, our work, or our relation to the universe around us—are revealed in an instant. Our language offers a choice of words to describe such moments of unusual awareness—words like premonition,



inspiration, intuition, and illumination. We treat these extraordinary moments with varying degrees of credibility, depending on what we believe to be possible—which in turn depends on what our society taught us ought to be possible (or at least what it thinks ought to be possible).

The great creative thinkers and originators of our society have almost invariably experienced this kind of “breakthrough” state in the course of producing their most valuable scientific theories, their most acclaimed works, their most revolutionary social or religious insights. In these cases, the hidden

part of the mind didn’t lead to a squeaky door hinge but to a new idea powerful enough to enrich humankind or alter the course of history.

Might the sound of the squeaky hinge that wakes you in the middle of the night, and the melody that floods into the mind of the composer, be more closely related than we have heretofore thought?

Are these kinds of talents and abilities possessed only by the few lucky enough to have been “gifted” with them? And if so, are they the result of chance mutation or inherited genes?

Or are they, instead, innate capacities we all possess and lack only the knowledge or training necessary to make proper use of them—capacities others have learned to use before and which we can learn to use ourselves?

Perhaps what we call genius has something to do with a learned state of consciousness, a way of attending to the stream of mental experience. Perhaps many more of us could hear inner melodies, find guidance and inspiration, achieve breakthrough insight—if we could only pay more attention to the fleeting images and the quiet intuitions presented to us by the creative mind. 

*Excerpted from Higher Creativity: Liberating the Unconscious for Breakthrough Insights (Tarcher/Putnam, 1984).*

# CREATIVITY

WE ARE LIVING IN A TIME when one age is dying and the new age is not yet born. To live with sensitivity in this age of limbo indeed requires courage. We are called upon to do something new, to confront a no man's land, to push into a forest where there are no well-worn paths and from which no one has returned to guide us. This is what the existentialists call the anxiety of nothingness. To live in the future means to leap into the unknown, and this requires a degree of courage for which there is no immediate precedent and which few people realize.

Courage is not a virtue or value among other personal values like love or fidelity. It is the foundation that underlies and gives reality to all other virtues and personal values. Without courage our love pales into mere dependency. Without courage our fidelity becomes conformism.

Whereas moral courage is the righting of wrongs, creative courage is the discovering of new forms, new symbols, new patterns on which a new society can be built. Every profession can and does require some creative courage. In our day, technology and engineering, diplomacy, business, and certainly teaching, all of these professions and scores of others are in the midst of radical change and require courageous persons to appreciate and direct this change. The need for creative courage is in direct proportion to the degree of change the profession is undergoing.

Since the Renaissance, the creative impulses of ourselves and our forefathers have been channeled into the making of technical things—creativity directed toward the advance and application of science. Such channeling of creativity into technical pursuits is appropriate on one level but serves as a psychological defense on a deeper level. For if we are not open to the unconscious, irrational, and transrational aspects of creativity, then our science and technology have helped block us off from what I shall call “creativity of the spirit.” To the extent that we lose this free, original

creativity, we shall also lose our scientific creativity. In modern physics it is very clear that the discoveries that later become utilized for our technological gains are generally made in the first place because a physicist lets his imagination go and discovers something simply for the joy of discovery. This always runs the risk of radically upsetting our previously nicely worked-out theories, as it did when Einstein introduced his theory of relativity, and Heisenberg introduced his principle of indeterminacy. My point is that creativity of the spirit does and must threaten the structure and presuppositions of our rational, orderly society and way of life.

Plato, in his beautiful dialogue the *Symposium*, described what he called the true artists—namely, those who give birth to some new reality. As I would put it, these are the ones who enlarge human consciousness. Their creativity is the most basic manifestation of a man or woman fulfilling his or her own being in the world.

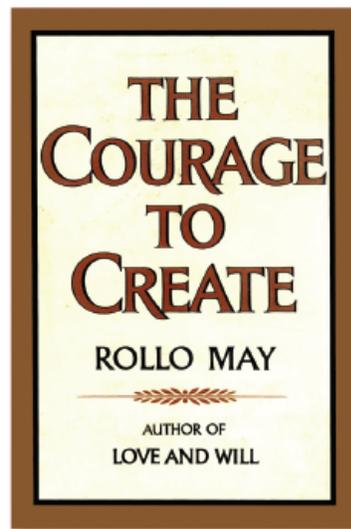
We are not dealing with hobbies, do-it-yourself movements, Sunday painting, or other forms of filling up leisure time. Nowhere has the meaning of creativity been

more disastrously lost than in the idea that it is something you do only on weekends!

The creative process must be explored as representing the highest degree of emotional health, as the expression of normal people in the act of actualizing themselves. Creativity must be seen in the work of the scientist as well as in that of the artist, in the thinker as well as in the aesthete; and one must not rule out the extent to which it is present in captains of modern technology as well as in a mother's normal relationship with her child. Creativity, as *Webster's* rightly indicates, is basically the process of making, of bringing into being.



*Excerpted from The Courage to Create (Norton, 1975).*



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