

THE DYNAMIC ASPECTS OF INSPIRATION:
An Essay on the Phenomenon of Authentically Being Inspired

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Introduction

Henri Bergson once said “always follow your inspiration.” We have found this to be true. Inspiration is the human being’s most creative act. Bergson’s statement of the human being as a “measureless virtuality,” for us, seems to display the height, depth and breadth of inspiration. Although measureless, inspiration is direct and can be seen when enacted by the inspired person. The inspired person can say yes or no to inspiration. This is viewed in terms of degrees of readiness and as an inspired option. But then again if this option is not taken up by the person, can we speak of inspiration? Probably the most respected aspect of inspiration, for us, is that it cannot be manipulated. A teacher cannot walk into a situation and say “I think I will inspire four people today.” Yet, a person can be an inspiration for the other and not know it, at that time and the inspired person does not say, at that time “gee! I’m being inspired.” A teacher can only offer the invitation to the possibility of inspiration through *openness*. An Experiential Expression of this would be “you can call on me.” Inspiration is a universal phenomenon yet touches each one of us personally. It cuts across and goes beyond any specific philosophy, psychology and religion. Inspiration comes from beyond. One cannot inspire oneself, inspiration comes from beyond the self and lights up something from within (Martin Heidegger “call to conscience”) the inspired person. Inspiration lights up and dis-closes personal meaning in a new way. We would like to offer a few distinctions here: encouragement is not inspiration, one may encourage the other but the other knows (felt dimension) if it is right, at that time. Although encouragement can, later on, maintain inspiration. In contrast to aspiration, ambition overrides values whereas *aspirations outline one’s future*. When reading this we would like to ask that the reader think in terms of an *inspiring other* and an *inspired person*. From an existential phenomenological view “you are the other!” For us, the nature of the human being is that being which can be inspired and is an aspiring being. This displays an *inspiration/aspiration dialectic*. We would like for the reader to keep in mind that *The Dynamic Aspects of Inspiration* is integral and as such the whole work shows the mutual interflow.

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Summary

I

A Time of Personal Change:
A Shift in Existential Meaning

The experience of authentically being inspired is a time of personal change. *A Shift in Existential Meaning* provides the overarching theme for this experience. A shift in personal understanding emerges as an expression of the experience. It arises from the inspired person's experience of being-with the other who is inspiring.

The presence of the inspiring other is the impetus for this shift in personal meaning as it activates an already-existing inclination toward becoming in the inspired person. This already-existing inclination is called one's *aspiring* nature. Fundamental to the inspiring experience is an *inspiration/aspiration dialectic* that arises in the *dynamic field of Inbetweenness* shared by the inspired person and the inspiring other. The inspired person is attracted toward the inspiring other. Not as a moth is to a flame rather the inspiring other initiates momentum toward reflective self-understanding. Being-with another person who is inspiring throws the inspired person's understanding of the meaning of existence open to reflective questioning and wondering. In the inspiring experience the reflection of the inspired person dis-closes a movement from discovery of my own meaning as a person, to my own possibilities for becoming who I aspire to be.

Experiences of authentically being inspired are dynamic by nature. They bring personal change. The inspired person's decisive action arises from options discovered as one's own by being-with the inspiring other. Experiences which arise in relationships of this nature are called *authentic moments*.

Authentic moments are turning points in experience. In the *dynamic field of Inbetweenness* the inspired person's movement toward an already-existing aspiration is clarified and strengthened as one's own possibility. This is integral to the meaning of the experience of authentically being inspired. Authentic moments bring a choice-point in experience in that one enacts an option to become that toward which one aspires.

This shift of self-understanding is positively valued by the inspired person. One feels that one's choice and actions are true to one's self-expression. A further deepening of self which has always-already been there is now given expression. Values present to the inspired person are guiding orientations in life and fundamental support which outline the meaning of personal existence. This shift in meaning emerges in the existential dimension.

Being inspired arises from a *dynamic interplay* through which the inspiring other and the inspired person meet. Upon this meeting ground, human values are initiated, clarified, strengthened or rejected. In the inspiring experience, one finds truth approaching from beyond the self via the presence of an inspiring other. The meaning of the inspiring other and the *dynamic field of Inbetweenness* they share bring the inspired person to meaning that cannot be alone discovered.

An experience of *breaking through boundaries* of self arises. This act of self-transcendence shows how one person frees another for one's ownmost possibilities. These possibilities are a gift given to the inspired person by the inspiring other. Acts of self-transcendence distinguish experiences of authentically being inspired from experiences of interpersonal possession where one person takes away another's possibilities to be oneself. Possession "strips from" while inspiration "frees for."

With this short introduction to the work, the discussion now turns to the three aspects of the shift in existential meaning. These arise from experiences of authentically being inspired.

A. Three Aspects of the Shift in Existential Meaning

i. *Aspiring*

The inspired person comes to the shared situation in a way which reveals a readiness to be present and an openness to discover new meanings. Neither a passive recipient nor someone overwhelmed by the inspiring other against one's own nature, the inspired person comes to self-understanding as already-disposed toward personal meaning. The inspired person's *aspiring* nature reveals who one has been, who one presently is and who one aspires to become.

ii. *Authentic Moments*

Being-with an inspiring other calls the inspired person to the meaning of personal existence in a way which is, through time, decisive. Responding to this appeal opens the inspired person to an attitude of reflective questioning and wondering. The inspired person's reflection reveals aspirations to be one's own possibility. This is an experience of "I am able to" *Authentic moments* stand out in one's experience to offer new possibilities which had until that time remained dormant to the inspired person.

iii. *Breaking Through Boundaries*

Acts of self-transcendence arise from the inspired person's affirmation of a personal possibility found through being-with the inspiring other. The inspired person experiences this as being freed for options which are not limiting and taken-for-granted experiences of self in the past. Movement by the inspired person into unfamiliar territory is experienced as *breaking through boundaries* of limitations to personal expression.

II

Aspiring

Aspirations are one's overall inclination toward becoming, where one is coming from as well as where one is going. Aspirations help reveal *how* a person emerges from the past and *who* that person aspires to become. People experience themselves as coming from somewhere and as being on the way to somewhere else. The bent of that direction is in terms of one's aspiring nature.

Aspirations outline a personal life meaning. This means that the aspiring person meets with an inspiring other in an already-unfolding life direction. The inspired person's openness toward this life direction allows for the possibility of authentically being inspired. Each person, at sometime in life, begins to become conscious of tending toward a particular future and to actively participate in this movement. This existential meaning often becomes present through being-with an inspiring other. Aspirations reveal a person's existential direction. They outline a personal expression to the world, an openness through which a person may be reached. People understand each other as where each has been and who each wants to become.

As one follows out an inclination toward becoming, it is possible to be an inspiring person for someone else. Inspiring people may not be conscious of the influence and impact they have upon the person being inspired. The experience arises spontaneously and intermittently. Being inspired cannot be planned.

The inspired person is open to and ready for the experience. The inspiring other may not be inspiring for other people or for the inspired person each time they are together. Openness and readiness for change are integral to the shared meeting ground. The intended direction of the aspiring person is revealed, enhanced and clarified as one's own possibility through being-with the inspiring other. In experiences of authentically being inspired, the inspired person finds something for which that person had been searching.

The inspired person's way of being-with the inspiring other vivifies the path of an emerging personal direction in life. The person who shares this situation is involved in a reciprocal manner yet each person is influenced by the relationship in a different way. The influence which arises from the *Inbetweenness* of an inspiring other and an inspired person is not symmetrical. Each person is influenced in terms of existential weight.

Experiences of authentically being inspired may arise with one or both people in the relationship. Both participate in the other's possibilities. Prior to the meeting, this possibility remained dormant. The nature and direction of the shift in existential meaning arises from the aspiring nature of those involved. The aspiring nature of a person includes already-existing values. As such, *aspirations outline one's future*. These guide expression of what is found in the experience.

A. Openness

Openness is for one to be available to meaning from beyond oneself. Gabriel Marcel discusses the possibility of authentic modes of experience which arises in "interpersonal communion."¹ To be, for Marcel, is to participate in being. It is only through participation that there can be a self. Being disposed toward one another in an affective unity is called "spiritual availability."² This ontological communion is the self's participation in being-with. Disposability is an opening-up and engagement is an entering-in. Disposability is expressed in hope and engagement is expressed in fidelity. Engagement is both involvement, being taken into and commitment, giving oneself up to. Participation is an immediate communion of beings who retain their distinctness.

From the *Inbetweenness* of the people involved arises a mutual interflow and exchange of existential meaning through permeability and openness for each other. The aspiring nature of each person gives voice to an intentional way of being-with another person. It reveals an intended life direction, revealing that the inspired person participates and is tending toward one's future. The inspired person comes to the situation with a past which reveals a thread of continuous meaning to personal existence and is conscious of moving toward something else in life. While for some this may be vague for others what is sought may be quite clear and specific. The inspired person may be aspiring toward a vocation, a certain attainment in a given field or the development of some personal expression. What is fundamental to the aspiring nature is an openness toward the values which guide the person's action.

This openness displays each person's ability to participate in choosing a direction. The inspiring other lights up possibilities for the inspired person. One's way of being present offers an invitation to another to become one's ownmost possibility. Looking at people as aspiring beings offers an alternative view to theories of motivation which see people directed by the driving forces of unmet needs. Motivation is commonly understood in terms of human action aimed at satisfaction of biological, personal and social needs or the needs of others. These theories are based upon the person as always being in a state of deprivation. Personal expression in action does not necessarily indicate that people meet and inspire each other in seeking out

satisfaction of unmet needs. Leaving insufficient room to understand people who are genuinely involved without any intent to manipulate, coerce, persuade or intimidate another person in light of self-vested interests, this approach to the aspiring nature violates the worth and dignity of all people. At worst, it precludes and inhibits the possibility of understanding the meaning of experiences which initiate, strengthen and facilitate personal change.³

B. Our Unfinished Nature

The nature of the human being for an existential phenomenological approach is understood as one who is on the road to becoming. We are, by nature, unfinished. The dynamic nature of our experience reveals aspirations to be in the deepest dimension of being, in the ontological.

This speaks to the ongoingness of our unfinished nature. We are aspiring, moving, unfolding and developing. Emphasis remains upon the person as already-being whole. A person is able to transcend limiting boundaries of self through the personal possibility for change. Existence and becoming are open-ended expressions lived by aspiring persons whose tendency is toward each person becoming who each can be. Shifts in meaning arise through experiences of authentically being inspired. Our unfinished nature is the basis for openness to this experience.

A person's disposability toward others dis-closes how possibilities for authentically being inspired emerge. One's own aspiring nature and intended direction outlines who could be an inspiring other. As already on the way toward that possibility, the inspired person sees that "I can be that." The inspired person is open to and ready for the experience. Being inspired cannot be imposed. It is accepted and received by choice.

A person's readiness to be inspired is not open to just any influence. Rather, there is a movement toward what one feels is right, at that time. One may be involved with several people at the same time yet one other stands out as inspiring.

In interpersonal situations, experiences of authentically being inspired arise from the *dynamic field of Inbetweenness* and bring forth options for personal change. The influence of the inspiring other comes through a willingness to respond. This is distinguished from one person who sways another's direction and development to suit one's own needs.

In experiences of authentically being inspired one may feel overwhelmed by new meaning. This is a moment of unity through the *Inbetweenness* shared by the inspiring other, the person who is inspired and the valued possibility found as my own. It becomes inextricably linked with

the invitation to express this option in action initiated by the inspiring experience. During the experience there is a self-forgetfulness by the inspired person.

The freedom found in this self-forgetfulness is distinguished from the experience where one is overwhelmed by an influence that goes against one's own will. In this situation, one person manipulates from above the ideals of the person below. This creates an experience of delusion in the interpersonal relationship.

In the experience of delusion one person uses influential power over another person in order to manipulate and control that person's action. The person being manipulated is stripped of personal possibilities and led away from a personal path and aspiring nature. Whereas, in experiences of authentically being inspired, the inspired person is not carried away from the personal path but is strengthened in the ability to make a personal choice and to be responsible for that choice.

In the experience of delusion, one person in the relationship overrides the other person's inclination toward becoming who that person aspires to be. There is a disregard for the respect and human dignity of one person for the other person's being. This way of relating is grounded in coercion rather than care.⁴ The deluded person is stripped of possibilities for free personal choice.

Although the inspiring other's presence may in some way be challenging and accompanied by personal strain, struggle and work, the other's supportive presence awakens aspirations and strengthens the inspired person. Authentically being inspired brings the inspired person into reflection upon the discovery of possibilities. This is contrasted to experiences of delusion and possession which strip and take away possibilities of self.

Already-existing values provide a foundation for personal action. Without these a person may be left open to any influence. Values disclose the inspiring other who awakens and releases the inspired person toward enactment of personal possibilities. In this way inspiration is distinguished from interpersonal persuasion where a person is induced to believe something by another through coercion or argument of advantages or disadvantages to a particular course of action.

This is a relationship of dominance-submission. In persuasion one person influences the other through interpersonal dominance. Whereas, in an *inspiration/aspiration dialectic*, the aspiring nature of the inspired person reveals an openness to and a readiness to respond to meaning represented by

the inspiring other. In the experience of being inspired, the inspired person's personal commitments receive support and are encouraged.

C. Readiness to Change

Authentically being inspired gives expression to an intended direction. It announces that a person is ready for personal change. The inspired person experiences an uneasiness with existing conditions. This gives notice to the inspired person for a movement toward something new as well as a movement away from what has been. This possibility was already-valued by the inspired person but was dormant in its clarity as my own.

Experiences of authentically being inspired affirm already-existing meaning. The inspired person is surprised at the ability to do and to be that which had remained dormant until this time.

Although the option may not be clearly apparent, it is an aspired-to possibility. The presence of the inspiring other calls the inspired person back to personal meaning, initiating movement beyond existing boundaries to self-understanding. The shift in existential meaning comes about as the person takes up meaning found in the experience of being inspired.⁵

The inspired person comes to affirm that through being-with others being is dis-closed for me. A person's incompleteness throws the person beyond the self in search of meaning. Our aspiring nature is the movement beyond the domain of self to enrichment of personal meaning through being-with others. The experience of existential incompleteness moves one toward aspirations.

III

Authentic Moments

Authentic moments dis-close personal meaning in a new way as the inspired person comes to turning points in self-understanding. This shifts the inspired person's self-understanding as well as interpersonal relationships.

During the relationship of being-with an inspiring other, the inspired person is called into reflection upon questions concerning the meaning of existence. This reflective self-questioning brings forth personal meaning. Called into reflection, the inspired person moves toward a different self-understanding.

Authentic moments are when the inspired person is in search of and moves toward meaning. Surprised by this spontaneous action, the inspired person is open to reflection upon these personal meanings. Integral to this surprise is that one discovers it is not oneself who precipitated the questioning but is something found through being-with the inspiring other. What is found in the return to Self is actualized as my own. Self represents a shift to authentic possibilities, when a person discovers and affirms a personal meaning of being.

A. Turning Points

The experience of authentically being inspired has a decisive impact upon personal meaning. It is a turning point in self-experience which is a revelation of personal understanding of past, present and future possibilities. The person's new experience of "being able to" displays the impact of the experience. "Being able to" is a beginning, where a person sees, feels and understands something personally significant. The new options for being which are dis-closed require decisive action by personal choice. This is a dynamic structure of personal freedom. The person either affirms or rejects the option. If one has authentically been inspired, there is affirmation. If not, there is a rejection of one's ownmost possibility.

There is a paradox in the experience of personal change. The experience of being inspired may bring initial confusion. Confusion in personal meaning may emerge when the person begins to question things. Yet, the experience gives voice to one's own already-chosen direction.

In either situation a turning point in self-understanding begins to emerge. The impact of the other calls the inspired person into a reflective questioning. The presence of the inspiring other is an invitation to move toward personal meaning. What is discovered by the inspired person is that the inspiring other represents and stands for lighting up my own possibilities.

Through these moments in experience a person is put in touch with personal meaning.

Authentic moments arise in different ways. They may arise during prolonged, diffused periods of time shared with the inspiring other or as very short, intense and challenging moments. They are moments of questioning which bring actions initiated by the inspired person. In this search is the "creme of reflection." The inspired person's usual way of relating to taken-for-granted meaning shifts as that person questions values, personal direction and aspirations. The inspired person's reflection is not only upon what the future may bring but upon what has been and who one is now. Values become personal as the inspired person discovers a direction in which to move and acts upon what is envisioned.

In these moments the experience initiates or conserves social and cultural traditions. Meanings go on through time as personal and social existence are instituted in a new way as each person enacts the values which guide both personal and community life. Authentic moments which arise in the *dynamic field of Inbetweenness* remain significant to the inspired person through time. The meaning of these moments goes beyond physical separation. They are significant to the inspired person in that turning points in self-understanding are initiated by an inspiring experience.

B. Incohesion in Experience

One aspect of personal change is the breaking down of meaning as it has been understood in the past. Being called back to oneself in self-questioning challenges the inspired person's taken-for-granted meaning world. The inspired person begins to look at gaps in understanding. Openness to new insights emerges as one begins to wonder about existence. Although the inspiring experience is a unifying of self-meaning, there is an incohesion in personal experience. This is wondering and questioning meaning which has been taken-for-granted.

Through the incohesion in experience, one is open to and for the meaning of others. This points to self-forgetfulness. The inspired person opens up to the other person, listening, watching and learning what is possible. Being open to the meaning of others is the nature of disposability. Interpersonal cohesiveness arises in the *dynamic field of Inbetweenness* shared by the inspired person and the inspiring other and is possible as the incohesion of experience opens one to the affirmation that "I am not enough alone."

Through the incohesion in experience alternatives shine through webs of certainty which have given coherence, order and stability to the inspired person's taken-for-granted self-understanding. In experiences of

authentically being inspired, this coherence, order and stability is called into question in light of something new discovered through being-with an inspiring other. Incohesion opens us to experience the unknown, what Martin Heidegger would call the “uncanny.”⁶ The familiar and taken-for-granted momentarily breaks down. Self-experience, at this time is open to meaning which approaches the person from beyond the self.

C. The Call

The experience of authentically being inspired brings the inspired person back to new possibilities for self-expression. One does not ponder and cogitate over these options as though deciding on the purchase of something. Rather, these possibilities emerge from the questioning of existence. They well up from the depths of one’s own being as one opens to a possibility now experienced as my own. For this reason, the person must consider the *motives of appeal* which call to one personally. This call, an appeal, is emanating from beyond oneself in the *dynamic field of Inbetweenness* shared with the inspiring other and from within one’s own aspiring nature.

Authentic moments emerge upon reflection by the inspired person only in relation to the ability to respond to and act upon the call. The appeal sent forth to the inspired person via the meaning of the inspiring other represents meaning which approaches the inspired person not only from the other’s presence but from the call to Self-direction which comes from within. This announces that it is a possibility to become one’s aspirations. Enactment of an intended direction is a movement toward personal change.

The inspiring other represents meaning which transcends both persons involved in the experience. The other who is inspiring is significant in terms of being an Other. The other becomes someone whose meaning is brought forth in the inspired person’s own existential way of being. As the inspired person acts upon the call a Self-Other meaning emerges.

From the meeting ground arises an interpersonal presence which is a close connection in personal meaning. Both people are included in the meaning of the inspiring experience. Not only does the experience bring light to the inspired person but during these times of authentic moments, a mutual interflow and exchange of personal meaning transpires. The inspiring other’s meaning for the inspired person is an irrevocable aspect of the experience which arises in the *dynamic field of Inbetweenness*. This interpersonal experience of self is brought forth in everyday activities by the inspired person. Even though the experience remains, its meaning for the person can shift.

The meaning of the inspiring other becomes an aspect of the experience of self-discovery⁷ found in authentic moments. Authentic moments arise in the inspired person's life when that person is open to meaning which approaches from beyond that person's own self. This meaning approaches the inspired person through the call to Self issued by the meaning of the inspiring other. *The appeal to return to the Self in reflection arises not only from the dynamic field of Inbetweenness shared with the inspiring other but from within the inspired person's own aspiring nature.*

Heidegger provides a ground to understand the call and response in authentic moments in an exploration of the nature of the human being. Possibilities for experience of an authentic nature are described as ontological structures of *Dasein* (Being-there), which Heidegger illustrates in a discussion of "moments-of-vision."⁸ The authentic and the inauthentic are two modes of being for *Dasein* in the experience of life. Most of the time we are in the taken-for-granted inauthentic mode of experience. The authentic mode of experience is much less common, arising only occasionally for each of us, exerting great influence upon the unfoldment of *Dasein*.

The common mode of experience, the inauthentic, is called the they-self. This is a mode of self-experience wherein human beings live everyday life caught up in taken-for-granted meanings which are given as existence. This mode of self-experience is unexamined and unquestioned.

Authentic modes of experience are when *Dasein* takes hold of its ownmost possibilities for being. In so doing, *Dasein* discloses its finiteness. Reflection upon the possibility of one's own death brings to light for *Dasein* its ownmost possibility for non-existence. Facing this possibility as one for me alone calls *Dasein* back to itself, to the Self. The self of everyday life "lost" in the they-self returns to the Self in a fleeting moment when the familiar and taken-for-granted nature of existence disappears. This provides a basis for understanding experience of authentic meaning of human existence. The possibility for death exists for *Dasein* and remains as one of my own possibilities, bringing each of us up against a barrier beyond which we know nothing. Heidegger concludes that *Dasein* cannot elude, escape or outdistance its own finiteness. In our everyday activities, we occasionally find ourselves faced with our own existential possibilities for being or being-not. These moments are unusual breaking through boundaries as we have known and light up the unknown in a way which brings *Dasein* into the personal. They are a time of breaking through boundaries of routine, monotone and taken-for-granted experience. For Heidegger, the authentic mode of experience is grounded in the future. The "call to conscience"⁹ that comes to the Self "lost" in the they-self calls *Dasein* back to its ownmost possibility for death. In this moment *Dasein* is confronted by its own

finitude. These moments bring a great deal of influence to bear upon the meaning of one's own existence.¹⁰

The taken-for-granted, secure easiness of the inauthentic mode of experience gives way to the unsure, uneasiness mode of authentic moments. The feeling of being-at-ease in the world gives way to *Dasein's* momentary experience of uncanniness and even of dread. According to Heidegger, these moments bring *Dasein* into the personal. Authentic moments are foundational in a person's life meaning and expression. Since *Dasein* is already a Being-with-Others, these moments are also possibilities which may arise through being-with another person in a way which calls *Dasein* to return to dis-closure of its own personal meaning. In an interpersonal situation, the other's presence represents the call, the appeal to return to one's own existential ground for reflection to discover one's ownmost possibilities.

Heidegger's exploration seeks the ontological structures of human existence, uncovering the possibility for being appealed to in authentic moments of experience shared with another person. This philosophical ground provides a psychological insight revealing that being-with others in a way which solicits authentic experience is a possibility found in everyday life. This experience is intermittent and arises spontaneously. As an authentic experience, being-with another person in this way brings a moment in personal experience that calls for a choice. This choice-point in experience presents the inspired person with options. One may choose to respond or choose not to respond to the call.

Choosing to be-not is opting to be-not one's possibilities and aspirations. Freedom to choose permits *Dasein* to be the basis for a "nullity."¹¹ It is a possibility for *Dasein* to be-not its ownmost possibilities as well as to choose its ownmost possibilities. The call to conscience calls *Dasein* back to the Self wherein authentic possibilities are dis-closed. *Dasein* is presented with a meaningful choice. When confronted with these options, *Dasein* may choose to be or to be-not. Each choice to be or to be-not dis-closes a direction of that life's personal expression.

To choose to be-not is *Dasein's* basis for being a notness, revealing *Dasein's* possibility for being-guilty. *Dasein's* possibility for being-guilty leads to the possibility for being resolute. In the moment-of-vision, when it becomes transparent to itself, *Dasein* is presented with meaning that calls to be affirmed or rejected. If affirmed, this option is enacted and lived and then influences the ongoing life development of personal existence. Non-affirmation brings naught.

Heidegger's exploration provides a ground for understanding how values in experience arise. Whereas, in the inauthentic modes of self-

experience, the choice by *Dasein* to be-not only covers up *Dasein's* ownmost possibilities of becoming. Experience is not personal in this mode as it remains in the they-self. *Dasein* makes its choice of its own possibility for being-guilty. Heidegger's ontological exploration does not place values upon action *per se*. It is only through *Dasein's* becoming conscious of its being in the world that it can move toward its ownmost possibilities. The authentic mode of our experience is upon transcendence in personal experience where truth is dis-closed in action. This experience involves a choice that brings being into the personal.

Both moments-of-vision and moments-of-conscience are foundational for understanding the nature of experiences of authentically being inspired. Being inspired is a primordial possibility for each person. It is when a person can be appealed to and called back to meaning. The inspired person may initially be vaguely conscious of it or that which is aspired-to may be specific and identifiable from the beginning. As one aspect of the shift in existential meaning, authentic moments reveal the person's dynamic freedom¹² to act in the face of an unknown future.

IV

Breaking Through Boundaries

Breaking through boundaries reveals the dynamic nature of the experience of authentically being inspired. The self-expression of personal meaning, of past, present and future, is a turning point in the ongoingness of personal development. The inspired person experiences a shift in existential meaning.

One aspect of this shift is being freed for one's aspirations through being-with the inspiring other. Through the *dynamic field of Inbetweenness* shared by the inspired person and the inspiring other, the inspired person is freed from previous boundaries to self-expression. These boundaries are experienced as personal limitations, what a person is not-yet able to be. Breaking through boundaries reveals the dynamic structure of Self-direction, an act of becoming.

A. Self-Transcendence

The experience of breaking through boundaries is a moment in experience when there is an in-gathering of personal meaning. Something new begins in terms of one's way of being. Upon the advent of this shift in understanding comes a future, one which the inspired person has been called into by the meaning found in authentic moments. The inspired person feels awakened to, conscious of and freed from boundaries that have restricted the freedom to choose. Being freed for choices in the act of becoming oneself dis-closes the dynamic structure of personal development. An intentional direction is involved in the meaning of one's experience of being freed. One is freed for something. The inspired person's options and choices arise. Facing the unknown of one's own being, the possibility of change, of becoming, involves a risk of self. Moving beyond the boundaries of the taken-for-granted meaning of experience the inspired person is now in unfamiliar territory. Choices lived and enacted in an inspiring experience dis-close the dynamic structure of transcendence.

Through transcending the self the inspired person is able to act upon options. This projects before the inspired person a future that has become an open possibility, an invitation to personal change. In this way, the inspiring experience is future-founding toward Self-direction. Marcel refers to this dynamic structure of human existence as an "urgent inner need for transcendence."¹³ Acts of self-transcendence arise from our moving nature, our capacity for change.

Marcel presents two experiences commonly referred to as transcendence. The first is upon a person's focal desire to possess some

particular power, which once achieved eradicates the initiating dissatisfaction. The example given is of a young girl deprived during childhood who later marries a man for money in order to satisfy material wants. This is not transcendence.

A second situation where a person has always had all material wants satisfied illustrates the urgent inner need for transcendence. Leading an easy life but still experiencing a vague aimlessness, the person feels life is not as it could be. In this example, the person gives up all material wants, embarking upon a spiritual adventure wherein the person encounters the world. This is transcendence.

Different aspirations arise from a person's incompleteness. The actions described by Marcel's first example arise from a state of deficiency. This vitalizes the person's movement toward activities which will allow the person to find the freedom to move toward elimination of this state of deficiency. A second kind of aspiration calls the person beyond the self taking the person forward into an unknown. The person moves toward that unknown in response to that which calls the person beyond self-boundaries. The first example, which is not the principle of transcendence, is focused upon the unique self. In the second example, the principle of transcendence comes from beyond the self where the person is called through an urgent inner need for transcendence.

In the experience of authentically being inspired, the appeal that comes to the inspired person is outlined by the inspired person's aspiring direction. The experience arises from an *inspiration/aspiration dialectic*, calling the inspired person forward into acts of self-transcendence. That which calls one toward moments of personal change holds no guarantee of the future. A risk of self is involved.

The call to create, to become, is a call to that which is beyond an existing self. The call that comes to the inspired person in authentic moments comes to a person who stretches out toward one's own becoming. The person moves beyond the existing boundaries of personal being through now enlivened aspirations. The urgent inner need for transcendence is a movement toward something new as well as a movement away from what has been. The values guiding the aspiring nature of the inspired person give voice to one's direction.

Discussion of authentic moments has revealed that the call to self-transcendence is a call emanating from beyond and within one's ownmost being, when the self returns to the Self in light of one's own readiness for acts of self-transcendence. As such, *self-transcendence is one's experience of breaking through boundaries*. One becomes who one is through personal choice. According to Marcel, the urgent inner need for transcendence is not

something that moves the person beyond all experience for there is nothing beyond experience. It is a striving toward a valued mode of personal existence. It is valued by the person who opts to enact that possibility as my own.

Through being inspired a person experiences a prompting to personal action, working out a possibility dis-closed as my own by being-with an inspiring other person. There transpires a *dynamic interplay* of the inspiring other and the aspiring nature of my own being. Each person participates in the experience of self-transcendence. It is a mutual interflow of experience.

B. Enacted Options

In the experience of authentically being inspired, the inspired person discovers options. As the inspired person affirms one of these existential options, it is enacted. *Enacted options* precipitate the shift in existential meaning and are given expression as experiences of personal change.

The inspiring other breaks in on the inspired person's taken-for-granted meaning and frees that person for enacting personal aspirations. The presence of the inspiring other brings something new into one's life, this is an invitation and a gift. The inspiring other bestows the gift of self upon the inspired person, which in turn, is enacted as one's own. Neither person is obligated to the other. The option presented to the inspired person may be affirmed or rejected. If affirmed through its enactment in everyday life, the authentic nature of the experience brings to clarity a Self-direction for the inspired person. If the option is rejected one says no to one's own invitation and freedom to change, to be one's ownmost possibility.

Enacted options hold no guarantee of success. The person acts in recognition that the possibility of a wrong choice exists but it feels right, at that time. The meaning of the inspiring other is intertwined with one's own act of becoming and experience of self-transcendence. The meaning of the inspiring other is integral to the inspired person's self-understanding. The gift is the freedom to be oneself. This is not something transferred from the inspiring other to the inspired person but something of the inspired person's own being brought to light by the presence and meaning of the other. Marcel refers to the gift of self as it emerges in acts of self-transcendence "The best part of my personality does not belong to me."¹⁴ Only through being-with others in experiences like authentically being inspired does one come upon the ground of one's own being.

The gift of self that comes into existence through this experience reveals that those involved are open toward each other. There is a unity of direction toward becoming a possibility and the new meaning of self as it

approaches the inspired person. The enacted option gives expression to the congruence of one's readiness for change and one's ability to respond.

The self-presence discovered by the inspired person, freely given by the inspiring other, dis-closes the authenticity involved in the inspiring other's experience. The *dynamic field of Inbetweenness* shared by the inspired person and the inspiring other gives rise to a dynamic structure. It is the gift found through being-with the other that offers one's own being. This illustrates the personal mode of authentic existence in acts of becoming.

The experience involved in one's enacted options brings the person into some new aspect of being oneself. Erwin Straus understands the movement in acts of "self-realization" as an expression of becoming oneself. Whereas, acts of "self-preservation" institute no personal change.¹⁵ In acts of self-preservation, the person recognizes the invitation but does not act upon what is envisioned.

Enacted options are acts of self-actualization. Personal values guide and direct expression of the inspired person during this action. Enacted options establish new horizons and boundaries of personal existence. An expression of personal existence becomes available and calls the inspired person beyond the self.

The experience of authentically being inspired does not convert the total personality of the inspired person. A shift in personal meaning transpires but not without regard to the capabilities and the suitability of the life situation. This provides coherence and solidarity to self-experience. The inspired person is confident to express what is felt to be my own being.

The shift in meaning is not something that transpires once and for all in one moment. Most often, what is dis-closed is something toward which the inspired person now directs effort, toward which the inspired person works. Personal meaning is rhythmic as is the experience of breaking through boundaries.

Straus uses the metaphor of rhythm to understand the change in personal meaning by discussing the emergence of new horizons in experience in relation to the acts of inspiring (breathing in) and expiring (breathing out).¹⁶ Each act is one aspect of a single process. Breathing, says Straus, permits the possibility for the human being to move beyond the boundary of immediate sensory experience. It creates a future, as in experiences of authentically being inspired.

In the physical act of breathing, the person is emancipated from the impact of immediate sensory experience. The person is freed for and now faced with possibilities. The experience opens the person toward an intended

direction, guided by values. Acts of self-transcendence emancipate the inspired person. This includes a risk of oneself. Taking this risk to enact options precipitates a shift in existential meaning. From this moment, something new begins.

C. Advent

Advent in experience is when something new begins. From this time forward the inspired person's life is different. Upon the advent of new meaning, the inspired person is momentarily lifted out of the humdrum of everyday life, finding insight into the personal meaning of life. The inspired person breaks through self-boundaries into an unfamiliar and unknown ground. New aspects of self-expression come into being. Inspiring experience is spontaneous, intermittent and is not constant or predictable. It announces new meaning. From this discovery emerges a new understanding of oneself and one's place in life.

Advent announces that something new and different has come into personal being. It expresses in action the change that has transpired in personal meaning. The dynamic structure of choice provides an advent of self-meaning. Although one's choices identify values in self-meaning, these choices arise through being-with another person. Turning toward the value brought to light by the other becomes the context for being inspired. A shift in personal meaning is related to the impact of the inspiring other's meaning and the readiness for change directed by the inspired person's aspiring nature.

One just finds oneself there. This "being able to" is available for the inspired person upon enactment of the valued option. A shift in personal meaning is seen, evaluated and understood only in relation to the passage of time. Upon the advent of this shift in existential meaning, the world of the inspired person takes on a new light.

What is learned in the experience of authentically being inspired is not necessarily logical in understanding where one meaning is directly emergent from that which has preceded it. In experiences of being inspired, meanings coalesce. There is an in-gathering of that which has been tending toward expression, in oblique movements in personal meaning. Being inspired arises spontaneously and intermittently without cognizing, wishing or intellectual formulating. To put what is envisioned as my own into practice requires work, fidelity and resoluteness by the inspired person. Being inspired arrives and departs unpredictably. Meaning enacted by the inspired person is taken up in an "act of faith" with no guarantee.

Actions of the inspired person open a path into the future of that person's own being. These actions stand out through being-with which is an

authentic mode of interpersonal presence. Inspiring experience unites people. The meaning of the inspiring other is taken up by the inspired person in a personal way and the inspired person's own meaning through the openness found in disposability. A mutual interflow and exchange of existential meaning moves through permeability and openness. Experiences of authentically being inspired are new beginnings in personal meaning. Being inspired is the advent of human existence.

V

Concluding Remarks

This work presents *The Dynamic Aspects of Inspiration* as the experience of authentically being inspired. This experience precipitates a shift in existential meaning through being-with a person who is inspiring. The meaning of the inspiring other represents a valued aspect of the inspired person's aspirations that comes forward and is owned as my own possibility.

The experience of authentically being inspired arises in the *dynamic field of Inbetweenness* shared by people who are already on the way toward personal becoming. This reveals the human being as unfinished, aspiring, unfolding and developing.¹⁷ Invitations to self-chosen options are offered in contrast to theories based upon the definition of human action as purely need-related. Human beings do choose meaning that they want their lives to express. This is the dynamic structure of freedom. The aspiring person who in action stretches beyond familiar self-expression and an inspiring other whose meaning approaches, touches the inspired person in a personal way. Through an incohesion in personal experience, the inspired person is open toward the meaning of the inspiring other and is conscious of a personal readiness for change.

To be inspired reveals an openness toward meaning that comes from beyond oneself. This openness founds the possibility to be appealed to by the meaning of others through experiences of being-with. Being-with another in this way calls the inspired person into reflective moments, questioning the meaning of personal existence. This questioning reveals to the inspired person options for personal change. Authentic moments solicit personal affirmation or rejection of these options by the inspired person. In experiences of authentically being inspired, the inspired person affirms the option.

The option for new modes of being arises in the *dynamic field of Inbetweenness* shared by persons, initiating a shift in self-expression to the aspiring person as chosen values guide personal action. The inspiring other calls the inspired person into reflection upon personal possibilities. This appeal that calls to the inspired person arises both from beyond through the meaning and presence of the inspiring other and from within through the inspired person's own aspiring nature. Personal aspirations reveal toward whom and what meaning a person is open and disposed. Aspirations are outlined and guided in action by human values. What one is inspired to do or become is personally meaningful, significant and valued.

Being-with an inspiring other is an invitation to the inspired person to take a risk and act upon what has been discovered as my own possibility.

Taking this risk and acting upon what is envisioned as my own opens the inspired person to the possibility of being not-able to be that which is aspired-to. In experiences of authentically being inspired, the inspired person enacts an option. What is enacted comes into being through time and working out that possibility in one's everyday life.

Enacted options are the inspired person's affirmation of an existential possibility discovered through an inspiring experience of being-with another person. Affirming the option involves a risk to the inspired person to be in a different way and initiates movement in personal meaning as breaking through boundaries of self-limitation exerted by the past, moving into unfamiliar and unknown territory.

The inspired person is called into a not-yet future. The inspiring other's way of being-with the inspired person affirms personal worth and dignity enhancing my own capabilities. This presence strengthens already-existing intentions of the inspired person. The impact of the presence of the inspiring other frees the inspired person to enact options as possibilities of my own. Authentically being inspired frees one for possibilities rather than stripping them from one as does interpersonal possession.

"Being able to" involves a readiness for change by the inspired person. Breaking through boundaries transpires as the inspired person works toward Self-direction. Being inspired breaks in on one's taken-for-granted experience. The inspiring other lights up being for the inspired person, bringing forth possibilities through an *inspiration/aspiration dialectic* that arises in the *dynamic field of Inbetweenness* shared by the inspired person and the inspiring other.

Experiences of authentically being inspired are spontaneous, intermittent and often surprising. These experiences arise in everyday life. By responding to the call issued by the meaning of the inspiring other, the inspired person enacts an option. The meaning of the inspiring other is integral to the inspired person's experience of "being able to be that to which one aspires." By enacting the possibility for being, the inspired person affirms new meaning. The inspired person's understanding of self, the relationships with others and a personal place in life are changed.

Experiences of authentically being inspired awaken, release and free the inspired person to move toward clarifying and enacting an "aspirational inclination" toward becoming. Being freed brings forth a resolute commitment to one's personal meaning. The inspired person's self-responsible action is guided by human values. Experiences of authentically being inspired clarify values that guide one's aspirations as the inspired person discovers the experience of "I can be that to which I aspire." It is an "existential shift," from "being-unable-to" to that of "being-able-to." The

experience not only initiates meaning for the inspired person but may conserve existing social and cultural traditions.

Upon the advent of the experience of authentically being inspired, something new emerges for the inspired person. Turning points in experience are enacted as one is changed. Integral to this change is the beginning of a new way of being oneself. The impact of an inspiring other's meaning upon the inspired person is one which initiates personal change. It is the advent of personal being in expression. Inspiration is an invitation to be all that one can be.¹⁸

Notes

- 1) Gabriel Marcel, *Metaphysical Journal*, trans. Bernard Wall (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1952), p. 258, pp. 314-317.
- 2) *Ibid.* "As soon as we are in Being we are beyond autonomy. That is why recollection, in so far as it is regaining contact with Being, takes me into a realm where autonomy is no longer conceivable; and this is just as true of inspiration, or of any action which involves the whole of what I am. (The love of a person is strictly comparable to inspiration in this respect.) The more I *am*, the more I assert my being, the less I think myself autonomous. The more I manage to conceive of my being the less subject to its own jurisdiction does it appear to me to be." Gabriel Marcel, *Being and Having*, trans. Katharine Farrer (Westminster: Dacre Press, 1949), pp. 132-133.
- 3) Our approach in this work is that as aspiring beings we are of strengths and weaknesses rather than lack or needs.
- 4) Heidegger presents the distinction between *concern* and *care*. Concern is for "things." Care is for people. To take the stance of concern is to treat the other as an object. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962). Our approach in this work is that we manipulate objects. Whereas, care for the other is the ground for authentically being-with. Inspiration comes from care, possession comes from concern.
- 5) For Heidegger "Intercepting is an act of receiving and yet at the same time a fresh act of giving." Martin Heidegger, "Holderlin and the Essence of Poetry" trans. Douglas Scott, *Existence and Being* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1949), p. 287.
- 6) Heidegger, *Being and Time*, *op. cit.*

- 7) Thomas Langan, *Self-Discovery* (San Francisco: Golden Phoenix Press, 1985).
- 8) Heidegger, *Being and Time, op. cit.* In a personal communication, 3 January 1988, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Thomas Langan brought to our attention that a closer translation from the German would be a “blink of the eye” rather than a “moment of vision.”
- 9) *Ibid.*
- 10) “To the anticipation which goes with resoluteness, there belongs a Present in accordance with which a resolution discloses the Situation. In resoluteness, the Present is not only brought back from distraction with the objects of one’s closest concern, but it gets held in the future and in having been. That *Present* which is held in authentic temporality and which thus is *authentic* itself, we call the ‘*moment of vision*’. This term must be understood in the active sense as an ecstasis. It means the resolute rapture with which Dasein is carried away to whatever possibilities and circumstances are encountered in the Situation as possible objects of concern, but a rapture which is *held* in resoluteness. The moment of vision is a phenomenon which *in principle* can *not* be clarified in terms of the ‘*now*’ [dem *Jetzt*]. The ‘*now*’ is a temporal phenomenon which belongs to time as within-time-ness: the ‘*now*’ ‘in which’ something arises, passes away, or is present-at-hand. ‘In the moment of vision’ nothing can occur; but as an authentic Present or waiting-towards, the moment of vision permits us to *encounter for the first time* what can be ‘in a time’ as ready-to-hand or present-at-hand.” Heidegger, *Being and Time, op. cit.*, pp. 387-388.
- 11) *Ibid.*
- 12) Dynamic freedom is to select and accept envisioned possibilities. It enables one movement from an inclination into an act of intention which is an enacted option.
- 13) Gabriel Marcel, *The Mystery of Being, I: Reflection and Mystery*, trans. G.S. Fraser (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1960), p. 51.
- 14) Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator*, trans. Emma Craufurd (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 19.
- 15) Erwin Straus, *Psychologie Der Menschlichen Welt* (Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag, 1960), p. 373.
- 16) *Ibid.*, pp. 298-315.

- 17) We have found that *being available, being attracted, being encouraged, being enlivened, being included, being authentic, being confident* and *being compassionate* although not inspiration itself are integral to it.
- 18) Original inspiration is for existence. Love is for being. Anxiety is an exasperation or a closing off. Inspiration is a freeing for or an opening to.

Summary

Dynamic Aspects of Inspiration

The Dynamic Aspects of Inspiration, the heart of our latest text, *Person to Person Inspiration*, explores the meaning of personal life. For many this is a time of questioning and searching. Henri Bergson once said “always follow your inspiration.” Bergson’s conception of the human being as a “measureless virtuality” displays the height, depth and breadth of inspiration. Inspiration is the human being’s most creative act. It is direct and seen only when enacted by the person who has been inspired. Inspiration comes from beyond one’s self, lighting up something within the inspired person and dis-closing personal meaning in a new way. This is an *inspiration/aspiration dialectic*, the occasion for a mutual interflow. The following three aspects describe the dynamics of this experience:

- i. *Aspiring*

The inspired person comes to the shared situation in a readiness to be present and an openness to discover new meaning. Neither a passive recipient nor as one overwhelmed by the inspiring other against one’s own nature, the inspired person comes to self-understanding as already-disposed toward personal meaning. The inspired person’s *aspiring* nature reveals who one has been, who one presently is and who one aspires to become.

- ii. *Authentic Moments*

Being-with an inspiring other calls the inspired person to the meaning of personal existence in a way which is, through time, decisive. Responding to this appeal opens the inspired person to reflective questioning and wondering. The inspired person’s reflection reveals aspirations as one’s own possibility. This is experienced as “I am able to.” *Authentic moments* stand out in experience, offering new possibilities which until this time remained dormant.

iii. *Breaking Through Boundaries*

Acts of self-transcendence arise from the inspired person's affirmation of a personal possibility found through being-with the inspiring other. The inspired person experiences this as being freed for options which are not limiting and taken-for-granted experiences of self in the past. Movement by the inspired person into unfamiliar territory is experienced as *breaking through boundaries*.

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