

Terror—Will—Faith

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Whakarāpopotonga

I roto i tēnei pepa ka nonoke te kaituhi i te pātai o te haere tonutanga o te mataora. Ko te tūhurainatanga a te kaituhi i te huri ki te kanikani, ā-tangata, ā-kaihaumarua kia taea ai te hiki haere tonu i te tūhuratanga o tēnei pātai tēnei e rapua ruri ana. Kai roto i tēnei wāhi pūkare ka whakamahia anō hoki e te kaituhi ngā whakaahua hai kukume i te kaupānui ki roto i tētahi kanikani hōhōnu, mātau kare-ā-roto tērā nōna ake te tinana/hinengaro. Ko te pōhiri a te kaituhi ki a rātau ake ki a tātau katoa hoki kia hauraro ki ‘te porehu pūmanawa’. Mai i tēnei ka whakahau te kaituhi i te ariā o te orokohanga, hai aratakihanga ki tēnei pōhiri.

Abstract

In this paper the author grapples creatively with the question of how to go on being. The author’s exploration of the use of dance, both as a person and as a clinician, in order to maintain an ongoing exploration of this question is poetically explored. In this evocative piece the author also uses images to invite the reader into a visceral, intellectual and emotional “dance” within the reader’s own body/mind. The author’s invitation to themselves and to us all is to surrender to “the divine mystery.” Within this the author emphasises the notion of morphogenesis, as a guide to this potent call.

Key words: Sustainability, performance, ecology, morphogenesis, God

For the 2020 NZAP Conference “Wiwini Wawana Wehi Ihi — Terror in the Transference” I planned to offer a performative presentation. Facing the terror of how can I go on?

As an older woman who practices psychotherapy and as a performance artiste I have discovered that this terror is, in no way mine alone. Confronted with the inevitability of age, physical, and possibly mental disintegration and, at a global level an enduring uncertainty, the question arises. Within the therapeutic encounter it arises with an insistence that can be terrifying.

Confronting the reality of living with the terror in my own life I profess will and faith as abiding currency. But do these have meaning or credibility for my clients? What energy of will or faith could possibly suffice?

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These, plus numinous aspects such as dream, vision, conviction, commitment, and calling, lie there between my client and me. *How* do we “do it” — how do we access these?

Curious, perhaps contentious, is how I engage with myself, my clients and the dynamics of:

- Calling,
- Vision, and
- Discipline.

My performed work — a dance — embodies and reveals this paper. The work demonstrates a terror in me/us, upon me/us — impermanent, hesitant/ongoing, in/tangible, real/ephemeral. The dance is an embodied representation of my belief that a profound, demanding career is not possible to sustain when what I (we) create is politicised, objectified into “work” and “object” — but that when it exists in the unpredictable, precarious realm of “process” — it is.

“To appreciate an artwork is to appreciate what is done” (Davies, 2004, p. 1). I argue that the practising of this which is active, alive, about process is vital — sustaining — and when this is absent, diminished, the terror invades, we become un nourished, as with:

Wings that are no longer wings to fly
But merely vans to beat the air,
The air that is now thoroughly small and dry
Smaller and dryer than the will. (Eliot, 1963, p. 96)

Note

1. Photos intersperse this essay. I am reluctant to give the photos definitive, categorical interpretations. To do so reduces these ephemeral moments into bounded objectifications, contradicting my premise that process — ephemeral and elusive though it be — is yet the doorway into possibility, opportunity, mystery. I give therefore just a line, linking the photo to the text, and inviting the reader to their own interpretation, their own story.
2. My client in this study is “K”. She is late forties, married and has two children in their twenties. Her presenting issue is she feels “endlessly, exhaustingly worried and afraid.”

With friends and colleagues I have been considering the subject of “going on.” Looking into the terror of global crises that seem to show up or iterate in what can appear as personal and community disintegration, what transcends this terror of disintegration, what enables a life to endure? As an older woman who practices psychotherapy and who is a performance artist I have discovered that this terror is not mine alone.

Mine is a curious career blend of psychotherapist and professional choreographer-dancer; and whilst not as a psychotherapist I am as a dance artiste, without hesitation, old. Confronted therefore with the inevitability of age, physical and possibly mental disintegration and, at a global level the uncertainty of what may be, of being at the edge, a unique terror arises. As my client faces age, uncertainty, the inevitability of things — whose terror are we tasting? Is it each other’s... the world’s?

In my personal life and inevitably reflected in my work is my belief in the practice and



FIG. 1: THE UNPREDICTABLE, PRECARIOUS REALM OF PROCESS

operation of ill; this is to do with the practical outworking of a personal code of practice: choosing, discipline, rigour, routine, and repetition. As well, in my life and work is reflected a personal decision of faith — to do with numinous qualities as belief, vision, conviction, commitment, shadow.

Confronting and engaging with the terror become then a conjoining with my spiritual beliefs: how I engage with terror, will, faith, calling, vision, pilgrimage, and what meanings these might have for me and my clients. It is perhaps unsurprising that these topics arise so often with my clients, reminding me again and again that who is on this journey is not “me” but “we.”

As well as through words I express and explore this in dance. Movement has the capacity to take us inward to the soul, a world within, for which we have no words. Movement reaches our deepest nature and dance creatively expresses it. Through dance we gain insights into the mystery of our lives. When brought forth and forged by the desire to create personal change, dance has the profound power to heal the body, psyche and soul (Halprin, 2000).

We do not deal with bodies, nor with minds, or even mind/body units, but with persons, unitary persons whose mental and physical states are utterly intertwined (Broom, 2003).

As a practitioner who uses dance in her psychotherapy practice, as a dance therapist, a choreographer and dancer, and because I believe in the psychotherapeutic efficacy of dance* (De Leon, 2007, 2014), I hold that the moving form communicates something beyond words, written or spoken. The movement vocabulary in which I work, using shape, nuance and

* As used on the basis of skilful and treatment-based intentionality. See American Dance Therapy Association (2012). <http://www.adta.org/Default.aspx?pageId=378213>

gesture, is designed to demonstrate the paradox between presence and impermanence, solidity/ephemerality, immanence, terror. It is a physicalised, embodied representation of my sense that terror/confronting the terror becomes overwhelming, even unmanageable when it is nominalised into object, but when it is “danced” (actually or through kinetic empathy), and is experienced as *process* (albeit unpredictable, precarious) — it is.



FIG. 2: THE “DO-ING” IT NOW IS LIFE-GIVING, VITAL

Yet how can something so unpredictable, so precarious, possibly meet an experience of terror and facilitate advent of equanimity? Is it possible for anything so *un-solid* to be sustained—let alone approach anything resembling the durability or ongoing-ness needed to not succumb to the subtle persuasion of age-victimhood, the fear of faculties crumbling... simply to keep going...?

David Davies (2004) contends that “to appreciate an artwork is to appreciate what was done” (p. 1). I argue that for the practising artist/therapist the fullest apprehension of both what was done — and, even more the “now” moment of do-ing — is life-giving, vital; and when it is diminished or absent the practitioner becomes unnourished, the terror softly rises “with wings that are no longer wings to fly, but merely vans to beat the air...” (Eliot, 1963, p. 96).

Drawn

Coming into being

The phrase “to appreciate an artwork is to appreciate what was done” (Bicknell in Davies, 2004, p. 1), I wish to extrapolate into a broader comment: that to appreciate life, our lives, is to appreciate what was done and, bringing it into the present “now time” — to appreciate

do-ing, the living of our lives now. Whilst the process is certainly an activity of now it is of course, also a conjoining of what has been and what will be: an unmeasured time of the flow, “this” and “that” — then and now of past and future.

A concept that beautifully describes this conjoining process is morphogenesis. Proposed by Rupert Sheldrake (2012), one of the world’s most innovative scientists, morphogenesis means a “coming into being of bodily form” (p. 131).^{*} Choreographing and presenting my dance is, in this sense, an embodied, sensate, sensual, morphogenesis. I suggest that this is also the work of the psychotherapist.

Morphogenesis is directional and, in the domains of biology and physics, it is shown to be such a force that “in spite of unexpected disturbances” (Sheldrake, 2012, p.138) it mobilises *everything and all* for its directionality to be maintained. Morphogenesis is purposeful, fundamental to the great “dance” or “choreography” of purpose.

“Purposes” are not physical constructs, items to be quantified. Purposes exist in the abstract, the virtual realm. A purpose is that towards which we strive, something we envision but is not yet realised; it is in a sense walking backwards from the envisioned whilst walking or being drawn forwards towards the desired future. In the language of dynamics (a branch of modern mathematics), this drawing-forwards energy is called the “attractor”: pulling, drawing us towards that-which-is-to-be-and-is-becoming; towards the potential to be realised (Sheldrake, 2012), connecting us to that which has not yet happened and is not yet realised — our purpose, our goal.

Sheldrake (2012) reminds us that our minds are of course more than our brains (just as psychotherapy is more than words and my dance more than steps). Our minds are the domain of thinking, hypothesising and dreaming... Our minds in space and time are linked to the past through morphic resonance and to the future (actual/or virtual) through attractors. Sheldrake calls this “field theory.”

This field activity — distinguishing, identifying, interpreting the attractor(s) that call me towards my potential and goal, plus the emotions and feelings that go with all these — is the energy that enlivens me and enables me to sustain.

Morphogenesis, attractors and field theory are, within this frame of understanding, all part of the morphic phenomena which Sheldrake (2012) describes as “a transfer taking place through a vibratory pattern of activity interacting with electromagnetic and quantum fields of a system” (p. 100). I call this an *elemental ontology of being*.

We — therapists, clients, creators, dancers, fellow-journeymen all — are certainly elemental, embodied, *real* reality. Whilst we are of course also metaphysical we are, in this earthly domain, obviously, physically, “doing.” These objective phenomena that can be seen, measured, heard, smelled, felt, filmed: the elemental ontological that we *do* identify us.

Many if not most of these doing phenomena and the ways I do them are inherent, inborn, instinctive and inherent; they propel me, they are the “moving causes” moving me to the goals and purposes to which I am called, to what and whom I am becoming, to the “final causes” (Sheldrake, 2012, p. 130).

“Moving” and “final” causes are echoed in the work of Teilhard de Chardin (1961), a biologist and philosopher of the Christian Jesuit mystical tradition, as he elucidates his thesis of the entire cosmological process being directed towards an “Omega point”: an

^{*} Morphogenesis is not validated by a body of empirical data challenges (Tallis, 2011) but it is innovative, creative and beautifully apt to this article.

attractor drawing all of life towards a state of “maximum organized complexity,” in which state, consciousness will be transformed (Sheldrake, 2012, p. 154). Similarly, in the morphic resonance concept Sheldrake also reflects Aristotle’s belief that everything in the universe has a “Final Cause” which is the form of its being. Because things obey natural laws to attain their proper end and purpose, and the coherency of these laws seems not accidental, then there would seem to be a direction (in Armstrong, 2009, p. 141); conceive of the “Omega God” or even “One separated from all duality; and in that One we should sink eternally down, out of ‘something’ into ‘nothing’” (Eckhart in Colledge & McGinn, 1981, p. 208).

If I accept that this is the flow and thrust of the cosmological process — of which process I most certainly am part — and further, proposing that my life-process is in some sense a microcosm of the greater whole (Sheldrake, 2012), then I suggest that I can rightly conclude that my small individual life is similarly moving towards some Omega point that is its own fulfilment. I further conclude, inasmuch as the evolutionary operation propels my life along, so it is, equally and simultaneously towards its fulfilment, *drawn*.



FIG. 3: *MY SMALL LIFE IS MOVING TOWARDS...*

When K explored this movement, both physically, and through kinaesthetic empathic engagement, it opened the door to a realm of longing, reaching, that we had not in our work thus far opened. She described a lifetime of reaching that she said made her endlessly tired. Together we began to consider other ways there might be to long for something yet without it being an utter drain upon the life energy.

Exploring the wide openings of Figures 1 and 2 was to begin with impossible for K. She said “opening my heart like that is too much to ask. I can’t” (K). Very gently, and in consecutive weeks, we experimented with opening first the fingers, then the hands, the shoulders, even the toes — until one day K. wanted to try out the opening movement altogether. She said she felt it gave her *life*.

Called

I further propose, inasmuch as the evolutionary operation propels my life along, so it is, equally and simultaneously towards its fulfilment, *drawn*...

What does this have to do with the topic? How could this possibly have potency to speak to the terror of the terrible, unrelenting insistence of “how can I go on?”

Operative in the sustaining and maintaining of my life and work is moving or final cause. Am I:

- pushed;
- or drawn;
- or called?

Does it matter?

It matters. As a practising artist and therapist with a 45-year record of practice there must be, I suggest, *something* that facilitates the continuance — and, continuance with resolve, sweat, hope, pleasure, joy, wavering, doubt-filled, terrifying, yet vivid, “fired,” ecstatic.

Between the moving and final causes, those which push from the past and those which pull from the future by attraction there exists a singular dance of paradox. Exploring the distinctions between the moving and final causes of my life is to enter, to be present *to*, to be *in* this precarious, terrifying, exquisite dance of paradox.

Balanced — at the eye of the paradox
between the contradictions
of despite and affirmation,
unbelief and love. (Donaldson, 1979, p. 442)

Despite and unbelief — could these not be the forms and shadows of what I do not (yet) accept, forms and shadows that pull me away from my core and rob me of the will to engage, endure, continue? Affirmation and love are “final cause,” that is, the causal flow of influence from the future backwards to the present — drawing me to what I am becoming, the steps of the dance of what I will be; of what will be.

But what does this look like? What is the tangible, actual manifestation of these poetic words and what shall I tell and show you that will reveal this paradox that is simultaneously moving *and* final, attractor *and* sustainer?

I confess, I live in a state of paradox. I feel urged one way and then another. I want to do this and end up doing that. I wish for this and the other is what happens. In my dance (which is also a metaphor for my inner self) I embody, I demonstrate the dynamic of striving to surrendering — and perhaps, for just a moment that state wherein I am in the flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Through kinetic empathy I *intend* that my audience will viscerally experience my dance in its physicality, its technical demands and mental concentration; I *intend* us to mutually engage in this act of “continual aligning of awareness to the here-and-now experience” (De Leon, 2014, p. 11); I *intend* us to embody the commitment to discipline, the sweat, the effort... and then that we (all) sense the synchronous energy of things coming together — an embodied non-dualism. Such immediacy, this sweaty muscular rawness.

Core to the paradox, to the coexistence of the opposites, the doing and the being, is a fierce dynamic, enabling us to look beyond the “already always” which would “lull us into overlooking or trivialising vast mysteries” (Efran et al., 1990, p. xiv) or seduce us into suspension of consciousness and mindfulness. It invites us to be open to a “meta” or spiritual aspect: invested with a different muscularity and best described as tapping into a dimension in which body and mind are not separate in function and understanding, but

one. This other dimension is more attuned. It is less directive. Here, mind, body, the dance and the quest of the work flow without one or other aspect dominating or leading. This is Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) state of flow, the optimal experience, the *satori* place of non-striving (Epstein, 1996), the transformative experience that cannot be expressed in words (Chodorow, 1991, p. 196), the entire body lit with awareness (Wigman, 1973), the dancer's place of ecstasy; this is "the Call" (in my personal experience).

I propose that the paradox and its terror can be held in a "dance of paradox," a kind of current and undertow.^{*} I hold that to maintain and sustain I will bow before the fact that not only are these currents deeply symbiotic, they cannot exist without each other — not solved, resolved, or dissolved — but poised at the "still point of a turning world" (Eliot, 1963, p. 177). (Perhaps the still point is the place, beyond space and time where the Call is birthed. Perhaps the still point is the morphogenetic beginning place for all...)



FIG. 4: *FALLING FORWARDS, FALLING BACKWARDS — WE LIVE IN A STATE OF PARADOX*

We play with falling forwards, falling backwards. She gives me permission to catch her as she falls! The tension of the paradox is desperately serious and then becomes terribly funny. We play and cry at the same time.

My objective in discussing paradox, currents and undercurrents, flow and undertow, is not to blend, merge or subsume these but to acknowledge the opposition-harmony, the connected-discrete and to declare their role in not only enabling "going on" but much

* A current under the surface, not apparent on the surface.

more — to giving life to its unfolding. This is not some passive mysticism, nor an emotionally-induced pseudo-enlightenment, nor a liminality in which I experience an emotional “feel-good”; it is a moving, active, participatory, blood, flesh, sweat and bone engagement, acknowledging and fully accepting “the cleavage and tension of opposites” (Jung, 1965, p. 209). In this “belly of paradox” (Merton, 1953, p. 11), in engagement with this conjunction, exists the opportunity for transcendent activity, because in it is “the presence of a capacity to transcend the destructive tendency to pull (or be pulled) to one side or the other” (Samuels et al., 1986, p. 151 as cited in Miller, 2004, p. 4). I suggest that when the therapist/dancer/me/us is/are able to accept and engage with “the presence of a capacity to transcend” (p. 4) the terror of the tension of opposites, then “given-ness” is an energising impetus for renewed on-going-ness. The tensions, conjoined, become a co-participatory choreography for therapist and client, dancer and audience, to gain a new position in which duality, cleavage, conflict, terror, and paradox not only coexist but (can) become transcendent.

The transcendent is “born not of a rational process, since no rational process can unite what are inherently separate opposites, but rather from a place that is not wholly understandable” (Miller, 2004, p. 46). It could seem just a marvellous theoretical idea but I have experienced with my clients that at this “not wholly understandable” moment we seem ready to “partake in the communion in which we no longer remain the same” (De Leon, 2007, p. 58).

The Still Point

Eliot’s still point, in my understanding, holds within itself the dynamic of morphogenesis (Sheldrake, 2012), flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), liminality (Martin, 2010), potential for transformative insight through stillness (De Leon, 2007) and the dynamic engagement of full embodiment (the dance). We encounter it in our awareness of “the grace of sense,” when we feel ourselves “lifted and moving”:

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
 Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
 But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
 Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,
 Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,
 There would be no dance, and there is only the dance...
 The inner freedom from the practical desire,
 The release from action and suffering, release from the inner
 And the outer compulsion, yet surrounded
 By a grace of sense, a white light lifted and moving. (Eliot, 1963, p. 177)

Here is a sense of a suspended, timeless state that is both and neither a coming towards nor a departing from. This is a paradox of a particular stillness that is yet full with movement, the peak of the up-breath — the *ah!* Whilst it is aware, conscious, mindful — yet it is *given*; un-orchestrated, un-manipulated — and to it, I am *given*.

The flow of influence from my unfolding/actual future, combined with the still point

that is the core of the dance, combined with the evolutionary *raison d'être* that encompasses the earth, the solar system, the galaxy and everything in it, including me, has direct and profound relevance to this terror/terrible question: “How can I go on?” — providing an obvious yet shattering answer: “I can’t not.”

Conatus (Spinoza, 2004, Part III Propositions 6–7)

However. To we free-thinking, independently-minded children of the latter half of the 20th century this now undeniably provokes the question of free will. Have I not chosen my career and do I not every day make a conscious, free will choice to persist and engage in and perform the motions and activities that enable this career to continue? The life of a psychotherapist, of a dancer-therapist, is rigorous and at times the only thing to be done is to endure. Do I not choose to endure?

I am no fugitive — escaped, escaping,
 No one has seen me stumble looking back.
 I run face forward. I am a pursuer...
 My life is a pursuit of a pursuit forever. It is the future that creates
 the present.
 I am an interminable chain of longing.
 (Frost, in Lathem & Thompson, 2002)

If the sustaining of my career is to do with my choosing to endure it, this seems to me somewhat analogous to the idea of *conatus*, proposed by the philosopher Baruch Spinoza. Spinoza held that mind and body were aspects of *Deus sive natura* (God or nature) — constantly interchanging, in parallel and the underlying reality for all of existence (Sheldrake, 2012). He proposed that the impetus and energy that motivates us to persevere in being-and-becoming, in fact our very essence, is a striving — that is, *conatus*. “Striving,” however, can have a ruthless, obsessive connotation (and the nature of my pursuit in my early training would easily persuade me and those who watched, to accept this interpretation). Striving also means determined and motivated and I hold that if one is to maintain a career that endures one must, necessarily, be determined and motivated.

Great determination will almost certainly maintain the “doing” of the work, but I question whether even very great determination is enough to feed the spirit; nurture the intangible quality that makes our work live and makes us love our work and enables our clients to take that one more... one more... one more break-through step.

Proponents of the materialist, rational view argue that the subtle energy that feeds, nurtures, and loves, is no more than the product of neural connections, synapses, the frontal lobe or the thalamus and is shut up and contained within my brain (Sheldrake, 2012). I do not espouse this view.

But if not there, then where and what is it?

We crawl forward, as if pleading, embodying the pleading, now we are really pleading... Is determination the answer for my client? (May I inspire-not press-inspire-not impress.) She glimpses some inner resolve: “I can do this.”



FIG. 5: GREAT DETERMINATION — IS ENOUGH TO FEED THE SPIRIT?

Given

(Of science and spirit — an answer, perhaps.)

Excluding none of the spiritual, emotional, will-driven and metaphysical influences, but including and embracing all of them, I suggest that this intangible, beyond-material energy that fires my vision, feeds my spirit, sustains my will and enables me to endure can well be named the energy of morphogenesis. Within the domain of the morphic field, mobilised and sustained through morphic resonance, lie my decision, my resolve, my enduring, my vision (Sheldrake, 2012, p. 100) — and this melding of energy and form, form and energy, this dance of form-energy, unbounded by time and space, resonating across time and space — “holds” me, carries me within it. Whilst I make claim to having chosen this path I equally and simultaneously acknowledge the greater momentum that carries me forwards and draws me to what I am becoming.

We can say this together. Together we acknowledge the greater momentum that carries us forwards and draws us to what-we-are-becoming. *We cannot do it any other way.*

A theme that echoes through the Bible is one of waiting for the fulfilment of the vision: “Though it tarries, wait for it” (Habakkuk 2:3, Holy Bible). Chambers (1935) remarks that the vision is never brought to fulfilment through our own efforts; instead we live under its inspiration until it fulfils itself. Reflected similarly in Zen philosophy, the journey is a stepping aside, allowing the goal to be realised; one is “irresistibly driven towards this goal” (Herrigal, 1953, p. 106).

Conclusion

My proposition then is that there is, from my purpose or goal, a causal flow of influence flowing backwards to me and simultaneously pulling me forwards to my purpose or goal — which is to be and is moving to its time of fulfilment (Sheldrake, 2012). For me this is of life-changing implication. From a spiritual perspective this intentional direction-connection gives reply to the despair of doubt, purposelessness, creative emptiness, the terror. This Calling, purpose, destiny, is the Calling of my soul.

Rowan Williams (2005), when he was Archbishop of Canterbury, stated: “Calling, vocation, is to do with saving your soul — not by acquiring a secure position of holiness, but by learning to shed the unreality that suffocates the very life of the soul” (Section 4).



FIG. 6: INTENTIONAL DIRECTION-CONNECTION GIVES REPLY TO THE DESPAIR OF DOUBT, PURPOSELESSNESS, CREATIVE EMPTINESS, THE TERROR

I suggest that the notion of morphogenesis (that which impels me from the past and that which is calling me from the future) is a human explanation for the divine mystery of (my) relation with God: whilst I am drawn irresistibly towards my goal I am, *equally and at the same time* absolutely required to make the decision to be what I am, to answer God's Call/God's Choreography in me, to do this without fuss and egoistic drama because what I am is already known (and loved and accepted) in God.

My vision of a (our) new performance, psychotherapy, *life ecology* I humbly borrow from Teilhard de Chardin (1973): "On that day, for the second time in the history of the world, human beings will have discovered fire" (p. 87).

She and I truly throw our arms open. We embody it (we *feel* how it feels).

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FIG. 7: GIVEN