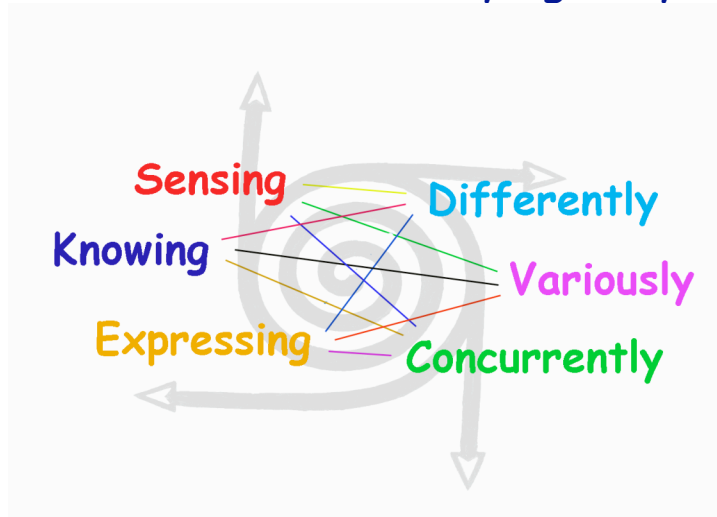




* On Alchemical Yogas of Knowing Variously *

Specific Exercises for Diversifying Ways of Knowing



Acknowledging Epistemic Re-Orientation and Diversification of Knowing as a 'Radical Challenge'

This text us an introduction to actual practices for reorienting knowing by evading reflexive habits of both mind and body. Overall, these efforts amount to ‘massaging the mind’ by varying cognitive strategies or epistemic modes for perceiving, thinking, interpreting, and expressing. However, initiating and persisting at these efforts is surprisingly difficult. Patience and persistence are required. Established human identity is so resistant to shifting its existing basis for valid understanding that attempting to engage a fundamental diversity of self and world is an inherently radical challenge.

The unstable ‘manyness of self and things’ is intrinsically disturbing to ‘ordinary attitudes.’ Successful attempts to think, feel, and act differently are often enthusiastically embraced but then either quickly ‘forgotten’ or soon subordinated to previously dominant beliefs, priorities, and preferences. The extreme version of this tendency is evident in persons addicted to substances such as alcohol who, even though

their dependency causes them illness and anguish, are repeatedly drawn back to its familiarity and the 'view of self and world' supported by it. Such is the 'force' of habitual mindsets. We are, if you will, addicted to our habitual mind sets and assumptions.

Thereby, newly acquired perspectives, methods, and knowledge are readily 'incorporated' as supports for the 'authority' of previously established patterns of thought and behavior. (Not a few communists have become fascists or capitalists, and vice versa, with no change in personality) Furthermore, people will often acknowledge having had the most extra-ordinary experiences but do not know how to understand these and so effectively 'reset' to a familiar sense of self and world. Therefore, seriously seeking unexpected reorientations to the plurality of how self and world are known requires determined tracking of the inevitable resistance of established orientations.

By way of emphasizing this issue of difficulty, it is worth noting that the seemingly simple exercises offered below are essentially as an inevitably inadequate substitute for a 'missing cultural component.' Pre-modern or archaic societies overtly provided contexts for such challenge to the dominance or ordinary identity and reality. Through mythological references and intense, collectively charged, ritual inductions of extra-ordinary states of being, most human societies once pushed individual identity into a more radically complex cosmological set of references for being. Under those socially supported conditions people confronted the radically complex, chaotically self-ordering dynamics of both their consciousness and phenomenal totality. Such efforts served to orient awareness toward establishing extra-ordinary relations with the dynamic complexities of the cosmos. Thereby the radical challenge of the reorientation was made both overt and collectively valid.

Those once traditional intentions have been invoked specifically here by references to the traditional practices of Hindu Yoga and Western Alchemy. However, some form of these efforts was typical of pre-modern cultures. That an impulse to seek such re-orientation is an inherent human impulse is evidenced by a persistent contemporary attraction to versions of such traditional archaic cultural methods. Yogas, meditations, sweat lodges, pilgrimage, psycho-active chemicals, tests of endurance, trance inductions, and artistic expressions continue to fascinate. However, contemporary persons must generally engage such acts in the absence of a supportive cultural context. A radical challenge to the dominance of habituated attitudes about personal identity and reality is relatively antithetical to the ethos of individualistic social orders. Contemporary socio-cultural standards conform people to expect a unitary consistency to selfhood and reality, thus 'building in' a reflexive resistance to any non-reductive status of concurrent consciousness. A sense of supremacy is imparted to the self-assertions of personality. Thus naivete about that background conditioning, and

consequently how difficult it is to challenge it, further debilitate attempts at non-reductive re-orientation of how self and world are known

Thus, in so far as a modern person seeks to accomplish some significant reorientation toward a greater appreciation and understanding of, perhaps even a sensed experience in/as, the more non-linear dynamic complexities of inclusive phenomena, they must view their effort as both ‘more than personal’ and ‘more than ordinary.’ They must further seek some basis of accepting and validating the incommensurate relationship between ordinarily reductive assumptions and the experience of self and world derived from experiences of ‘concurrency consciousness.’ To be effective in promoting a more concurrently activated condition of diversified knowing, understanding, expressing (and thus ‘presencing’) involves a shift away from pursuit of a unitary sense of personal control, confidence, satisfaction, and social approval.

The categories of practices for epistemic diversification’ listed below are not in and of themselves effective challenges to reductive orientation. That is, many of these same exercises can be engaged with intentions to *enhance* an attitude of ‘self-importance,’ idealized perfection, increased personal control, or even simply as a form of ‘egoic entertainment’ that poses no challenge to ordinary identity and reality. The quality of one’s intentional attitude in engaging these practices is extremely significant. Loosening the grip of reflexive knowing is not simply an ‘egoic act’ of ‘personal will power’ because such assertion derives from habitual identity.

Some Guidelines:

Be Wary of Goals, Judgment, Competition, Idealization

>>> Witness Reflexive Behavior: While making efforts to elaborate and amplify contrasting modes of experiencing, examining, and interpreting, expect to experience reflexive assertions of habitual attitudes about identity and reality. It is a significant change in awareness to simply observe these as ‘part of the experience.’

>>> Practice Acceptance of the Unfamiliar: Try to be willing to accept unfamiliar, confusing, even disturbing experiences, thoughts, and implications as at least potentially valid and meaningful—despite how these challenge one’s habitual preferences and assumptions. It is appropriate to find one’s self thinking: ‘I am doing/feeling/thinking this but I don’t believe it,’ or, ‘it doesn’t make sense,’ or, ‘it isn’t really me.’ ‘Disbelief’ can be a reassuring factor.

>>> Compare & Contrast without Judgment: Compare differing perspectives, methods, results related to these efforts while suspending judgment about which is ultimately superior. Try being ‘present’ in their different experiences or understandings without having to ‘order’ them in terms of accuracy or importance.

>>> Value Contrast & Contradiction: Appreciate and preserve any sense of ambivalence and paradoxical validity. Savor complex inter-relatedness of ‘neither this way

nor that,' or, 'both this way and that way.' This effort is sometimes termed 'holding the tension of opposites.'

>>> Resist Idealization: Take notice of impulses to idealize or privilege any particular perspective, method, insight, or interpretation. Be wary of systematic programs with predetermined expectations of specified results. Ideal status imposes hierarchies and oppositions.

>>> Be Aware of Perfectionism: Acknowledge impulses to 'get it right' and attempt to regard these as 'one more state of being.' Perfectionism expresses reductive impulses.

>>> Defer Competition: Regard these efforts as explorations rather than competitive tasks—even if a group is involved. The intention is to engage unexpected complexities of one's own psyche. In so far as mind is chaotically various there is no single or 'right way' to encounter it. Concern with doing 'best' or 'first' narrows awareness.

>>> Consider Process as Goal: Predetermining outcomes tends to direct attention toward controlling the process. The general purpose in these efforts is to provoke unexpected perception, thought, expression, and experience. Yet even concentration on that as 'goal' can reinforce habitual attitudes.

>>> Take the Efforts Seriously: And lastly, remember that one's attitude about the general significance of these efforts tends to determine how potent of an effect might result. If approached as 'mere oddity' or 'entertaining distractions,' then habitual attitudes tend to immediately be granted dominance over whatever might emerge.

Approached as an individual, efforts at shifting mental, physical, or social aspects of awareness and behavior readily provoke challenges from the reflexive attitudes of others. Thus it can be important to avoid discussing these with other people—unless they are equally involved in similar efforts. Attempts to explain that one is seeking reorientation toward the greater uncertainty of non-reductive attitudes can expose one to reflexive cultural judgments. It can be more effective to 'privately' alter one's habitual processes and then attempt to witness what effects result, both 'internally' and in how others subsequently respond. When engaging these efforts interpersonally, among two or more persons, a relatively equal level of motive and intention for 'doing differently' seems to be important. It does not appear effective to try to compel others to attempt these practices if they do not have their own motive. However, as in teaching, some times a significant motive can be elicited.

'Positive' and 'Negative' Practices:

Doing Differently versus 'Not Doing the Usual'

In some regard any practice that emphasizes a particular quality of effort also represses or avoids some other qualities. Seeking to be 'open minded' involves avoiding being 'closed minded.' But an important distinction can be made between '*doing differently by doing the unfamiliar*' and '*doing differently by not doing the habitual.*' Some habits are so powerfully dominant that to 'positively do differently' can seem impossible. Thus

it is often more effective to concentrate effort on negatively ‘not doing X’ before attempting to ‘do Y.’ If one is attempting to speak more carefully and thoughtfully in public, it might well work best to begin simply by ‘not speaking in public’ for some time. However, practices of ‘not doing’ can be surprisingly challenging when involving efforts directed at tracking and interrupting reflexive activities of mind and body (like ‘not smoking’). Thus it can be important to approach these in the form of ‘doing something simple’ as a way of ‘not doing something habitual.’ A person attempting to defer the habit of smoking might take up sketching. Meditation practices often seek to interrupt obsessive habitual mental patterns by re-directing the focus of consciousness to a single object or action, such as attempting to ‘thoughtlessly’ contemplate a flower or the autonomic process of breathing. These are in effect ‘positive negations’ of habitual patterns of thought and action. Such maneuvers are appropriate to re-orienting attention.

This mode of ‘not doing by doing a single or simple effort’ is a useful aspect of practice that can be employed even during other more complicated efforts. Confusion, distress, and irritation that arise when attempting to ‘do differently’ can often be dispelled by some moments of such a simple ‘not-doing-by-doing’ practice such as ‘breath contemplation.’ This tactic can apply to negotiating the frustrations of learning unfamiliar modes of acting such an athletic endeavor, artistic style, social demeanor, or intellectual concept. Efforts to ‘do differently’ that challenge elemental habits of knowing, thinking, or feeling intrinsically tend to provoke resistance in the forms of frustration, procrastination, boredom, argumentation, depression, embarrassment, and awkwardness—in some instances, even anger or irrational panic. The more reactive feelings can actually be indications that habitual attitudes are ‘losing their grip.’

Attention Re-Orientation Using Unusual, Pluralistic, and Non-Specific Focus

Shifting one’s habitual tendencies of perception, cognition, and interpretation involve redirecting one’s awareness or attention. Habitual or reflexive ways of seeing, thinking, and acting are evaded by re-orienting these activities of consciousness and body. A general distinction can be made between practices that seek to focus attention in some specifically singular but relatively unusual manner, those that attempt to pluralize attention into a consciously poly-focal condition, and some that seek to maintain attentive awareness without any particular focus. Emphasis can thus be placed upon a singular object, event, or feeling, or else upon several concurrently, or even upon not fixing awareness on any particular ‘point’ at all. These redirections and diffusions of awareness are applied variously in efforts to diversify habitual orientations of consciousness—from its more abstract qualities of ‘analytical mind’ to its role as ‘embodied sensual awareness.’ Thus the term re-orientation will be used here to emphasize that a significant diversification of ways of knowing involves a ‘departure’ from what and how one normally knows.

Aspects of Cognitive Activity and its Applications that can be Elaborated by Challenging Habits:

In approaching more specific practices, it can be useful to consider some various aspects of cognitive and expressive activity suitable to diversification and elaboration.

- ***Feeling** (enhancing emotional and sensory responses as ways of knowing)
- ***Analyzing** (emphasizing intuition, reflection, intellectual honesty, non-reduction)
- ***Interpreting** (exploring psychological, sociological, mythological associations)
- ***Imagining** (facilitating spontaneous, unplanned, & ‘unconsciously’ derived images, impulses, and associations)
- ***Acting** (prompting metaphorically symbolic gesture, activity, creativity, and interaction with others)
- ***Expressing** (broadening language usage, style, relational discourse, artistic efforts)
- ***Making** (creating, crafting, constructing in new ways, contexts, materials)
- ***Directing** (promoting more complex, challenging, contrasting approaches to tasks)
- ***Relating** (co-operatively engaging each other’s unfamiliar aspects, those of world)
- ***Teaching** (elucidating and affirming complexities and interactivities of intellect, feelings, interests, motives, analysis, expression in individual students as well as groups)

Below some examples of particular practices for shifting consciousness are offered. Those are followed by a more general outline of types of such practices and exercises with very brief characterizations. These are offered to provide an orienting palette of references to guide composing personal or group practices. The list might also be helpful in considering participation in existing contexts such as university classes, art courses, beginning a new physical discipline, or attempting more reflective and expressive approaches to interpersonal relationships.

Again, in general, seeking to ‘do differently’ is much more difficult than people often expect. Yet the difficulty typically does not derive simply from a lack of ability but from anxiety about how one will be perceived, or perceives one’s self, in ‘the act of attempting to think or do differently.’ Habits are the basis of existing identity and reality—for both individuals and social collectives. Reflexive habits rarely cease to control behavior simply because one consciously decides these should no longer be dominant. Thus feelings of awkwardness can actually be helpful in prompting self-reflective awareness. An attraction toward radical complexity or ‘mythical status’ is one thing—‘inhabiting it’ as ‘embodied consciousness’ is another. Indeed, such an effort is probably best described as fitful and ‘life long.’

Focusing Practices on an Individual's Specific Interests and Resistances

It is difficult to predict what type of practice will be more effective in re-orienting the mental habits of any given person. ‘One size’ does not fit all. And any given practice is likely to affect different people differently. In general, however, efforts that provoke the

most disturbance or emotional response might be the more stimulating. Those that arouse interest but seem ‘beyond one’s capacity’ and those that provoke negative reaction, resistance, and fear indicate that habitual egoic attitudes probably find such efforts threatening to their control over notions of identity and reality. Thus pursuing activities that one adapts to easily can be less likely to re-orient awareness. It can be important to ‘go against preference and comfort.’ What is interesting and intimidating seems to hold particular potential.

In addition to attempting practices that seem strange, disturbing, even somehow improper or offensive, one can focus many of the general methods listed below on subjects relevant to emerging interests. When a person experiences a vague or peripheral awareness of interest in some subject or activity that is not ‘part of ordinary life or identity,’ then studying that subject or doing that activity as a ‘regular practice’ might ‘loosen the grip’ of habitual attitudes.

Some Specific Examples of Consciousness Diversifying Practices

The following descriptions are arranged in two categories: one for solo or individual practice and one for collective efforts. These particular practices or exercises are suggested because they are readily accessible and not associated with any complex procedures. Though these efforts might seem simplistic to some, engaging them often produces surprising effects and shifts of perspective. No claim is made here that these versions can have the potency of the traditional ritualizations practiced in mythical, pre-modern societies. But even we moderns can provoke extra-ordinary awareness if we are willing to try.

Individual Practices

Setting out to reorient one’s own attitudes about ‘what goes on in here’ and how that enables one to ‘know what goes on out there’ requires some amount of commitment to embracing uncertain, even enigmatic results. Approached seriously—that is, with a willingness to be significantly reoriented toward self, others and world—it can be a strange and marvelous adventure indeed. One primary caution is not to expect any ‘transcendental transformation’ into a ‘higher being’ of equanimity, bliss, or super potency. Another concern is to be wary of naïvete regarding other people’s interest in or approval of what one is attempting. When the effects feel particularly stimulating or interesting, one can feel compelled by indiscrete enthusiasm and a desire to ‘share with others.’ Patient persistence is required.

* **Expressive Style Variation**

* **Archetypal Amplification**

- * **Meditative Concentration**
- * **Phantasm Consciousness**
- * **Imaginal Metamorphosis**
- * **Symbolic Ritual Gesture**
- * **Dream Correspondence**
- * **Third Person Journaling**

* **Expressive Style Variation:** This is an exercise in varying and comparing styles of expression—in ‘saying it this way’ then ‘saying it that way.’ Select a particular mode of expression, such as writing, speaking spontaneously (you can record your voice), drawing/painting, making music or dancing. Practice expressing thoughts and feelings about a particular topic using contrasting styles or forms, such as literalistic & metaphorical, prose & verse, objective & subjective, realistic & symbolic or surrealistic, orderly & chaotic, seriously & comically. Attempt to ‘push’ these contrasts to relatively extreme versions of how a particular concept, issue, or feeling ‘is.’ Then contemplate how each version presents some actuality or ‘truth.’ This practice can be done on a regular basis, attending to different topics that arise in one’s life as somehow important, by expressing them first in one style, then another. Periodically reflecting upon the accumulated versions and contrasts over time can also prompt a greater sense of subtlety and complexity. The intended result of these efforts is not to privilege one or ‘reach agreement’ between the different modes of expression. But rather to enhance how these can diversify one’s awareness and understanding.

* **Archetypal Amplification:** This is an exercise in analytic amplification of composition or character. It is also indicated here by the term archetyalizing. It can be engaged simply by contemplating an object and the range of its originating and identifying associations. Also, a concept or topic of some interest can be selected (broad ones such as Love, Marriage, Commerce, Physics, or more particular ones such as basketball, cooking, fashion) and then analyzed for archetypal aspects of its composition, activity, and origins. This is an exercise in ‘opening up’ rather than ‘narrowing down’ to singularly definitive status. What characteristic elements, motifs, perspectives, and dynamics together constitute the ‘range of manifestation’ associated with this subject? Actually drawing ‘maps’ of these elements and their various inter-relations helps elaborate the archetypality of the subject into a form of ‘constellation’—that is, a ‘non-linear,’ non-hierarchical complex of relationships. The various aspects can then better be experienced for how these reflect and even constitute each other.

One can then proceed further to archetypalize one of these ‘elemental traits’ of the original subject, thereby experiencing how any topic, thing, or concept exists in a continuum of non-reductive associations. Marriage might be construed as involving partnership. Archetypalizing partnership can reveal further associations that amplify

implied aspects of marriage. This mode of constellating the references that ‘compose’ a particular concept or activity typically reveals contrasting, paradoxical, even contradictory aspects. The concept ‘love’ is taken to indicate affection, care, kindness, but also passion, jealousy, sexuality, even loss. Practicing this exercise with some frequency, even on rather randomly chosen topics, can bring archetypal awareness into a more prominent role in one’s understanding of ‘what goes on around us.’

***Meditative Concentration:** Often this type of practice involves a ‘not doing by doing’ intended to ‘calm the mind,’ ‘clear’ it of ‘ordinary clutter,’ or even ‘purify’ it of thoughts regarded as somehow ‘corrupting.’ There are various traditional modes of mind-focusing meditations but in general most involve methods for interrupting ordinary thought processes. Those linked to doctrinal systems of religious or spiritual belief seek to effect a change in ‘mental patterning of attention’ by directing awareness toward a somehow sacred or holy reference (chanting a rosary, repeating a mantra, imagining/invoking a particular god, saint or bodhisattva).

Some meditations commence with a more overt emphasis upon ‘not doing’ —as in ‘sitting still, not moving,’ or ‘not thinking.’ Others emphasize a particular doing, such as ‘one point concentration,’ in which one keeps attention focused upon a single element (an object such as a flower, or the passage of air in and out of the nostrils). The latter type also can reorient awareness by engaging it in more overt activities, such as walking, rhythmic movement (Tai Chi), or rapid deep breathing (‘fire breath’). One of the simplest breath practices is to count during the inhale, beginning say to 5, pause holding the breath, again counting to 5, then count again during the exhale. The count can be extended as one practices and in this way serves to keep one’s awareness ‘occupied’ so that it does not return to its habitual thoughts and concerns. In addition, extending the count and the length of time inhaling, holding, and exhaling interrupts one’s typical, unconscious body habits of respiration.

Another version involves concentrating awareness upon feeling actual sensations occurring on localized areas of the body (such as associated with the Vipassana style). In this practice, one can ‘fix’ one’s attention on one area, such as the top of the head, and keep directing awareness there until some physical sensation of that region becomes evident. The focus of awareness can then be shifted slightly and the process of concentration repeated in a progressive ‘scan’ of parts of the body. This process typically involves developing awareness of body aspects of which one is seldom, if ever, directly conscious in ordinary states of mind. At the same time, it tends to disrupt the reiteration of habitual concerns and thoughts that tend to dominate sense of self and world. Its diversifying effect on self-awareness can gradually aggregate to constitute a more concurrent condition of body awareness by feeling sensation first independently

then collectively, as in from the top of the head to throat, abdomen, and feet, then ‘all at once’ to practice concurrently diversified attention.

Another result, particularly of using the more ‘activating’ methods, like sustained rapid deep breathing, can stimulate vivid dream-like effects or ‘streams’ of relatively ‘altered consciousness.’ Unusual and unfamiliar images or scenarios can ‘pop into awareness.’ The dream-like imagery that ‘comes to awareness’ in this condition can prompt provocative associations. Such experience exposes waking awareness to the ordinarily unacknowledged activities of a more metaphorically symbolic ‘state of mind’ that coexists ‘beside’ habitual waking consciousness.

From the perspective of the present writing, those meditative styles that ‘multiply’ aspects of awareness about body and mind are preferred as means of diversifying ways of knowing the conditions of being and becoming. Using such simple techniques as breath concentration, body sensation scanning, or sustained rapid breathing can allow a shift in the type of consciousness one experiences. Over time these practices can assist in developing that more observative, ‘unattached’ or relatively ‘neutral’ egoic awareness needed to promote ‘epistemic juggling.’ Sessions of anywhere from 10 to 30 minutes can stimulate significant experiences of such ‘altered states of being,’

***Phantasm Consciousness:** This term is offered here in reference to how one can focus awareness on the psychical nature of all knowing. That is, in so far as ‘the things of the world’ (whether of self, objects, or events) are known to consciousness *by way of* sensations, images, concepts, calculations, measurements, and language, what we ‘know’ are just these. Focusing on that notion, one can then practice ‘going about the world’ while directing one’s overt awareness to how things and events ‘out there’ are, quite literally, being experienced as ‘psychical manifestations’ occurring ‘in here.’ Thereby one seeks to overtly experience the mysterious process by which one ‘knows the things of the world’ as the ‘thingless things of thought’—whether ‘things’ as abstract concepts or that one actually touches, smells, sees, hears *as ‘mental sensations.’* Thus the term ‘phantasm consciousness’ is used because one is seeking to become more ‘consciously aware’ of how reality is literally known ‘as phantasms’ or ‘imaginings of things.’ This exercise often has its most pronounced effects when done in a busy urban context. One can compare this act of ‘seeing things as imaginations’ to ‘strolling through an art gallery’ except that the ‘gallery’ is the ‘real world.’ Obviously, this mode is practically inappropriate to engage when one is performing technical actions—such as operating machinery or crossing the road!

***Imaginal Metamorphosis:** This is an imaginal exercise in experiencing ‘alternative being.’ The phrase is posed here to designate the deliberate induction of a sense of ‘becoming other.’ The status of consciousness indicated is one in which a person seeks

to experience being ‘other than human.’ Thereby, one can concentrate on feeling/thinking/doing as a cat, a machine, a waterfall, or a tree in the wind. One can even extend one’s conscious sense of self to ‘incorporate’ complexes of things, such as a whole city or the contextual elements of a lake with all its myriad life forms ‘swimming one’s body.’ Thus there are two traits of this exercise: ‘becoming that other thing,’ or ‘becoming an other thing of other things.’

***Symbolic Ritual Gesture:** This is an exercise in personal symbolic enactment meant to manifest more-than-ordinarily complex meaning. The pertinent concept of ritual applied here is that it involves deliberately focused efforts to ‘induce an altered state of relationship to self, others, and/or world.’ As such, ritual acts overtly depart from ordinary contexts of expression and meaning making to manifest less reductive ‘language’ for engaging self, other, and world. Part of this effect involves a departure from literalistic representations and definitions, moving more overtly into expression asserting metaphorical, metamorphic, and symbolic meanings. Ritualizing thereby becomes a ‘gestural act’ rather than a ‘manipulative action,’ the significance of which compounds rather than defines meaning. It enables humans to ‘enact meaning’ or ‘act meaningfully’ without having to rely upon the ordinary, pragmatic standards of identity, validity, or importance. One might say ritual ‘figures’ meaning, in the sense of ‘creating an image,’ rather than ‘defines’ it.

Engaged as a personal practice, such ritualizing can be as simple as an ambiguous hand gesture in response to a farewell, the ‘making of an offering’ such as placing food on a grave, or an unusual phrase spoken in response to events that ‘feel’ significant or complex in some more-than-ordinary way. Encountering a dead animal (death/mortality), cutting down plants or trees (destroying to create), sitting down to eat (life feeding on life, that will in turn be ‘fed upon’), boarding an airplane (dependency on unknown others and mysterious ‘forces’), can all be re-contexted by ritual acts so that awareness of these habitual events is ‘extended’ to embrace the ‘background’ complexities involved. Some might want to term such acts as ‘prayer.’ But ritual gesture is distinguished here from prayer in so far as the latter seeks to ‘fix’ the extraordinary in, or credit it to, some explicitly ‘known order’—i.e., ‘god’s doing for which I give thanks.’ Rather, the symbolic gesture indicated here is more concerned with heightening awareness of and even inducing a sense of ‘participating in’ the overwhelmingly complex interrelatedness of things and events, along with the intricate web of human feelings provoked by those relations.

Symbolic ritual gesturing is an intrinsic part of being human, the cultural significance of which has been diminished in a historically exceptional way by mechanistic modernist pragmatism. It was once a primary mode of responding to the extra-ordinary significances of what have become mostly ‘ordinary events’ in contemporary life:

adolescence transitions to adulthood, marriage, pregnancy, birth, death. The consciousness of ritual gesture does not ‘see’ or experience the world as a ‘machine.’ What has become most difficult in such efforts is deferring the judgments of habitual attitudes that tend to immediately interpret these acts in literal terms or to denigrate them as ‘merely metaphor.’ Thus ritual enactment is often facilitated by designating a particular place for them, such as keeping a small altar or shrine, to avoiding their exposure to non-participants.

***Dream Correspondence:** This is both an imaginal and expressive exercise. Even the most pragmatic and literalistic among us are ‘visited’ by more-than-ordinary states of consciousness in the form of dreams. Dream experience can be considered to include images, scenarios, sensations, emotions, concepts, and transformations, all expressing permutations of ordinary status of identity and reality. The latter include metaphorical recombinations of the ordinary states of things, people, places, ideas, time, events, and one’s self, as well as metamorphic changes of these from one status to another. One approach to characterizing such expression of consciousness is to class it as intrinsically symbolic. That is, in so far as it ‘makes meaning’ it does so by way of symbolic juxtapositions and archetypal associations between ordinarily unrelated phenomena, rather than by literalistic correspondences and causality. Dream images and events are thusly understood to represent something other than their literal qualities suggest. When one’s waking consciousness engages these relatively strange expressions as inherently and variously meaningful, then a potential interaction between ordinary attitudes and relatively ‘un’ or ‘sub-conscious’ aspects of mind becomes possible. Two approaches to facilitating such an ‘encounter’ are mentioned here.

Correspondence by Image Making: This engagement takes the form of actually drawing versions of images which appear in dreams, particularly those seeming puzzling or fascinating. This constitutes a form of response by waking consciousness to the ‘offerings’ of its ‘dreaming twin.’ By thusly mirroring dreaming’s ‘language of symbolic imagery,’ ordinary waking awareness affirms its attentiveness to the chaotically complex ‘interior’ of mind or psyche. Relative artistic skill is unimportant to this exercise. All that is required is that one can look at whatever one draws and be reminded of the dreaming from which the images derive. By displaying and contemplating these drawings or paintings they become ‘lived with’ in the realm of ordinary waking consciousness. A potential for correspondence emerges in which these aspects of mind can interact in a directly observable manner. People who pursue this practice claim that their dreaming sometimes seems to ‘respond to the response’ and that, over time, contemplation of the dream images prompts unexpected insights about their meaningfulness. Sculpture is another means of making these images ‘come to life’ so that one can ‘dwell with them.’

Correspondence by Embodiment: This engagement involves a condition of ‘imaginal reality’ referred to as “dream embodiment.” After writing down images and events remembered upon waking, a person can later concentrate upon ‘how the body feels’ when he or she actively re-imagines the dream scenes and scenarios. This method of bringing dreaming expression into a present relation with waking awareness can prompt unexpected emotional and physiological experience. This method is understood as enabling the ‘body of waking consciousness’ to experience concerns and impulses related to activities of minding that are repressed or obscured by ordinary attitudes of habitual personality. Curiously, this mode of engagement can be quite potent long after the actual dates of having recorded a dream. Dreams ‘long forgotten’ that are ‘revisited’ using this method can generate vivid sensations and surprising insights. Furthermore, while focusing on feeling the presence of, and one’s presence in, the sensory environment of a ‘dreamscape,’ one can ask one’s self ‘What else is here? If I look around or sniff, what comes to awareness?’ In this way dream contexts and scenarios can become further elaborated. (This effort can be greatly facilitated by a group context, as mentioned below).

Approaching correspondence with dream consciousness in this manner is considered by some to activate a modality of ‘body learning’ or non-rational, sensation-triggered cognitive processing. In this view, the mind somehow learns from or about itself (relates diverse aspects of its modes of knowing and understanding) by literally ‘incorporating’ one aspect of consciousness into the status of another—i.e., the ‘unconscious’ into the ‘conscious,’ or the metaphorically symbolic into the pragmatically rationally.

* **Third Person Journaling**

This is a writing practice in which one writes about one’s experiences *as another person*. That is, one writes a descriptive narrative in the third person voice. An overtly conscious effort is made to generate a narrator that ‘is not me.’ That maneuver can allow one to view one’s life from more varied perspectives as well as promote describing it in unfamiliar styles. By writing about personal behaviors and interactions with others and environments as if the person writing were a present observer considerable latitude is granted to one’s awareness. Narrative perspective can also be assumed from the vantage point of actual people one is engaged with in the world, or by assuming the attitude of some literary author of fiction, non-fiction, or poetry. This mode of journaling can be carried on during the same periods of life when one is also keeping a journal in the first person narrative voice. It can be practiced in conjunction with the Expressive Style Variation exercise described above. That is, one can try describing one’s self and actions in a literalistic mode, a poetically metaphorical mode, or a surrealistically disjunctive, juxtapositional one.

Group Practices

Group efforts can involve two or several people. Some practices even accommodate tens of persons. Basic considerations for participating in collective efforts involve mutuality of motive and agreement on process. Disparity in motive between individuals can become a significant factor if some feel particularly reactive or obstructive. Members resistant to submitting ordinary identity and sense of reality to the uncertainties and confusions of the mind's 'meaningfully chaotic nature' can inhibit efforts to be extra-ordinarily attentive. In a general sense, groups are somewhat compelled to approach these practices with the 'motive of the majority.' Thus it appears rather futile to expect or pressure people to 'venture farther than they are willing.' However, similar willingness or motive does not mean everyone acts in the same manner. There are those in groups who prefer to mostly observe. This attitude can actually provide a form of 'container' for whatever emerges when 'making openings to extra-ordinary consciousness.' It has been noted that groups composed of people unfamiliar with each other or who do not live locally often seem more flexible about thinking and acting in less ordinary and more symbolic manners.

Agreement upon process and any leadership or guidance roles is often important. Group efforts often provoke control impulses in individuals. Either one or more persons will feel a need to 'be in control' or become so frustrated by a non-linear, non-directed process that they protest against the seeming disorder. These moments, like any of emotional expression or interpersonal conflict, are not necessarily to be avoided or simply repressed. Rather, they can be acknowledged as 'part of what is happening'—an attitude that usually defuses reactivity and supports collaborative attention. Confusion and agitation are often signs that significant shifts in awareness are occurring. Persons prompted to actively obstruct or denigrate the group effort pose a more significant difficulty. Yet, again, if their feelings and thoughts can be somehow incorporated as 'part of the process,' then a collective effort often continues. Periods of some active or intense engagement with unusual modes of perceiving, thinking, feeling, and acting need not be prolonged to be significant. Concluding or revisiting such sessions in a mood of collective 'debriefing' can prove most interesting also. Those practices described in some detail below are selected for accessibility.

- ***Collective Composition**
- ***Process Oriented Dialogue**
- ***Collective Ritualizing**
- ***Third Thing Conversation**
- ***Dream Embodiment Reflection**
- ***Reverse Argumentation**

***Collective Composition:** This is an exercise in experiencing the unplanned emergence of unexpected associations and meaning related to the potential of chaotic self-organization. Composing texts is typically done by individual persons, whether as prose, poetry, or lyrics. Habitual attitudes tend to direct such composition. Those habits are evaded when a group of persons generates unplanned composition by compiling a sequence of phrases or sentences with little or no prior discussion of a topic. Each person writes a phrase or sentence, without knowing what others have written. These phrases can be written in sequence on paper folded to conceal previous phrases. Or, written on separate slips of paper, they can then be ‘drawn from a hat’ to compose a form of free verse, their sequence discussed and then variously arranged to see what meaningfulness emerges. In another approach, each person is allowed to know only what the previous person in a sequence has written. The resulting compositions can at times be provocatively suggestive, even lyrical, as if some ‘collective consciousness’ were being expressed. Collective intention to regard these experiences as more than merely amusing can make quite a difference in how awareness is affected. The group attitude can be contexted somewhat by a topic of conversation or contemplation of an image or passage of music. Subsequent attempts to interpret the resulting compositions are an important part of the exercise.

Another version of group composition is to begin with one person drawing some image or images at the top of a page. The next person to see the page writes a sentence related to the image. The paper is then folded to hide the original drawing and the third person to view the paper draws images in relation to the visible sentence. The paper is then folded again so only the third person’s drawing is visible to the next or fourth person in the sequence, who now writes a sentence somehow related to the third person’s drawing. This process continues until all present have had a turn. Then the page is unfolded and the composition read and viewed ‘as a story.’ All these versions of unplanned group composition can confront ordinary habitual attitudes with strange and sometimes affecting associations or metaphors—while also tending to be amusing.

***Process Oriented Dialogue:** This exercise is particularly focused upon experiencing the self-directedness of collaborative thought. The term is used to designate a concept of engaging in a collective discourse that is guided by what views, questions, concerns emerge *in the process* itself. That orientation requires a collective commitment to seeking mutual understanding of what each person is stating, or attempting to state, and how that suggests a direction for the discourse to ‘follow.’ This approach is intended to contrast discussions that begin with predetermined direction or partisan opinions or result in argumentation about whose view is more correct must be avoided. Thus, if person ‘A’ begins the discourse by making an observation about how dealing with an aging parent makes here feel tired and sad, then the next person to speak must explore the first person’s subject and views rather than compete with, judge, or contradict those.

In this manner, a conversation can unfold that is difficult to anticipate and usually not structured by people's more typical 'issues' and expressions. Unexpected novelty emerges from this process of avoiding competitive discourse. A related description of such a process is termed "Bohmian Dialogue," named after the physicist David Bohm who conceived that it is possible to pay conscious attention to thought as a process rather than as 'content.' Conducting discourse for the purpose of attending to the process of how thought 'emerges, develops, proceeds' by the differing qualities of different people's contributions and how these are explored for concordance and difference creates a context in which the variousness and complexity of consciousness can be more directly appreciated.

***Collective Ritualizing:** This is an exercise in making cooperative symbolic enactments. Groups of persons can engage in the symbolic activity of ritual gesture described above under individual practices. Group efforts can actually enhance a sense of spontaneous symbolic expression by agreeing to avoid preplanned actions while cooperating to improvise significant representations. Under such constraints, while collectively ritualizing a response to or expression of a selected topic, event, or conflict, conscious awareness is attuned to 'what comes up' rather than 'what we usually think and do.' When there is no particular authority directing such an intention the emerging process can be disorganized yet surprisingly energizing and expressive. Given a topic, specified space and time, and a few physical elements to work with (furniture, clothe, candles, voices, flowers, water, fire, language, music, dancing, etc.) a group can often surprise themselves with the subtle and compelling gestures they elaborate. Here again a combination of attentive collaboration without specific goals can give expression to normally unacknowledged feelings, thoughts, images, and meanings.

***Third Thing Conversation:** This is an exercise in bringing less habitual thoughts into an interpersonal discourse. Conversations often proceed in extremely habituated ways, reflexive exchanges about the weather being a stereotypical example. Such habits of topic, phrasing, sequencing tend to obscure thoughts and feelings that are somehow present in consciousness but seldom receive expression. The mode of speaking with another person indicted by the phrase 'third thing conversation' involves activating a deliberate internal awareness of what 'comes to mind' to say. The first impulse, which might be a phrase such as 'having a nice day?', is noted but not spoken. Then some other topic or phrase will 'arise.' That one also is silently noted, but not spoken. Only the third impulse to 'present itself' to conscious awareness is given verbal expression. If two or more persons engage in this process of 'waiting for the third thing' for five or more minutes, some very curious sequences of 'dialogue' result. As a result one can gain some insight into 'what really goes on in there.'

***Dream Embodiment Reflection:** This is a collective mode of the dream correspondence discussed above under individual practices. In this version a group of people acts to provide a supportive and attentive context for an individual recounting and experientially ‘inhabiting’ a dream. The dream ‘teller’ recounts the dream scenario, describing the ‘dreamscape’ along with the events occurring to the ‘dream ego’ (one’s personal presence in the dream). Group members listen attentively and can ask questions about aspects of the dream. Those questions often prompt the teller to ‘remember’ or ‘notice’ more detail about the dreamscape than initially ‘came to mind’ when trying to remember it. Group members can also ask about what the dream teller feels physically or emotionally at any given point in the dream. This is the primary intention of the practice, to focus and intensify the dream tellers ‘felt embodiment’ of the dream as a ‘living form of consciousness.’ Interpretation of the ‘meaning’ of the dream is to be avoided, as the intention of this practice is to activate ‘somatic learning’ in which the experience of the dream state is ‘incarnated’ in the body of waking consciousness. Some view that process as facilitating a form of communication between differing aspects of modes of mind.

*** Reverse Argumentation**

Everyone tends to have familiar ‘positions’ they argue in respect to particular interpersonal, social, political, and cultural issues. One’s thoughts associated with such established perspectives and related arguments tend to manifest one’s habituated assumptions about self and world. Such issues thus provide an opportunity to ‘reverse’ one’s typical orientation by ‘arguing against’ it. Thus, if two or more people can identify an issue about which they each have established yet contrasting assumptions and interpretations, the potential for reverse argumentation arises. If one person tends to promote abortion and another oppose it, then they can switch positions and argue from the ‘other side.’ This exercise can be extended to researching the unfamiliar perspective so that one is in the position of looking for evidence and theory that supports an argument they would ordinarily reject. The epistemological benefits of this effort include being able to observe more overtly just how one goes about constructing opinions and arguments because the effort is being applied to a perspective one does not ‘believe in.’ In addition, one can become more aware of how and why others take the perspectives and make the arguments they do. It can be shocking to discover that opponents often make virtually the same arguments. What then actually ‘holds them apart?’

Categories of Types of Awareness Altering Practices

The following list attempts to correlate aspects of awareness and expressiveness with examples of practices that can be effective in diversifying the ways these ‘know’ self, other, and world. Some of the examples given will be recognizable as traditional

cultural practices. Others are drawn from psychological insights and themes in various intellectual discourses, as well as from literary, artistic, and theatrical styles of expression. This simplistic outline is offered as an aide to thinking about how modes of knowing can be amplified. In addition, individuals considering what practices might be appropriate for them personally can use it as a reference for composing their own approach to re-orienting their awareness. The general categories used here are not posed as exclusively separate or distinct—there are various points of overlap. These are:

- * Practices of Mental and Intellectual Re-Orientation
- * Practices of Physical and Somatic Re-Orientation
- * Practices of Mind < > Body Re-Orientation
- * Practices of Expressive and Representational Re-Orientation
- * Practices of Communicative and Relational Re-Orientation
- * Practices of Imaginal Re-Orientation
- * Practices of Contextual and Environmental Re-Orientation
- * Practices of Life Stage Re-Orientation

WARNING: Descriptions of actions mentioned below are provided as references not prescriptions. These constellate a variety of potential elements that can be useful for some persons under some conditions as stimulants for diversifying awareness. Some involve physical exertion and risk. Others can prompt emotional eruptions and cognitive confusions. Whenever seriously challenging habitual attitudes and physical capacities it is best to work collectively and establish parameters for each practice and session. Abruptly induced extreme experimentation is not likely to effect lasting reorientations of attitudes and assumptions. The effort is effectively 'life long.'

* Practices of Mental and Intellectual Re-Orientation

This category can seem the most complex and primary, in that it more directly addresses the challenge of dispelling the dominance of habitual mental behaviors which limit awareness and understanding. These include obsessive thought patterns, repressions of self-experience, privileged concepts or rationalizations, biased analytical methods, and unconscious cognitive strategies. Three areas of focus appear to be distinguishable for confronting the reflexive activities of mind characterized by emphasis upon prioritization, definitive interpretation, mechanistic analysis, quantitative evaluation,

and reductive judgment. The first two are more psychological, the third more methodological.

The first involves interrupting and suspending habitual patterns, thus allowing the mind to experience awareness without familiar goals. A second involves training mind to differentiate a more 'neutral' aspect of self-perspective. That quality of awareness can be termed a neutral or 'non-attached' function of egoic identity. This can involve contemplations such as 'I am not my thoughts.' Such a seemingly detached perspective on the character and behavior of one's own consciousness is essential to becoming an effective 'epistemic juggler.'

A third focuses upon attempts to learn and develop proficiency at unfamiliar, more diversified methods of processing perceptions, attending to the complexities of cognitive responses, and generating appropriately subtle interpretations. This last involves practicing the application of differing cognitive perspectives upon 'how things are the way they are,' In the most general sense these involve contrasts such as objective versus subjective, reductive versus non-reductive, emotional versus rational, artistic versus scientific. Such distinctions can be even more particularly posed in the contrasts of intellectual disciplines such as biological versus theological,

The last of these three efforts (suspension of habitual thought, development of neutral ego function, practice of diversified methods for knowing) depends considerably on the effectiveness of the first two for its potency. Various contrasting methodologies can be learned without necessarily affecting the behavior of ones habitual personality. That is, learning to 'deploy' various methods of knowing can remain subordinated to mental habits that reflexively assert a reductively narrow sense of self, other, and world. Developing a function of relatively neutral egoic identity that can differentiate a sense of self from mind's habitual tendencies, and those of its social indoctrinations, seems essential to fully appreciating the implications of 'knowing things variously' such that one experiences the reorientation of 'knowing concurrently.'

>>> Meditative Concentration

**Thought Suspending Focus:* a sustained effort to continually direct conscious awareness to a specific, seemingly simple 'target.'

--Such as upon breathing (either its normally reflexive rhythm, as rapidly intensified, or as gradually extended while counting).

--By tracking body sensations that normally go unacknowledged (heart beat, skin awareness).

--By maintaining fixed 'single point' attention, as upon a single sound, or by looking at or feeling a particular object,

* **Logic Confounding Contemplations:** concentrations upon paradoxical notions.
--By reflecting upon or repetitively saying, writing, or chanting phrases that elude singular interpretation (such as Zen koans, or something like 'I am I, I am Not-I, I am Not-Not-I,' 'I am the River, I am the Shore,' or 'Praise spirit of matter, matter of spirit praise.')

>>> Feeling and Emotion Reflection

* **Attentive Concentration on Mood:** focus on affective states such as anger, depression, fear, anticipation, specific anxieties as 'ways of knowing.'

--By attempting to 'inhabit' the mood itself, rather than the 'topic' to which it seems to refer, thereby seeking to amplify the experience in order to discover 'what is in there' that is not obvious. Surprising thoughts and feelings can emerge allows the mood to 'make its own associations.' It is usually 'about something.'

* **Feeling Concepts:** exploring what affective feelings arise in response to a topic or concept.

--By focusing on familiar ideas while attending to any arising affective response.

--By responding to thoughts of 'I think . . . ,' or 'I believe . . . ,' or 'the truth is . . . ,' with the question, 'So how do I feel emotionally, even physically about that statement?'

>>> Unfamiliar Intellectual Practice and Stimulus

* **Archetypalizing States of Being:** analyzing objects, subjects, ideas, beliefs, theories, social roles, cultural expressions to elaborate their archetypal associations and constellate their non-linear status.

* **Challenging Existing Comprehension:** engaging new subjects and methods to see 'what you make of them'; do research on what is interesting but intimidating.

* **Engaging Deconstructive Methods of Analysis:** examine familiar statements of 'fact' and value for implied hierarchies, binary oppositions, unacknowledged assumptions about what is true, preferred, right (i. e., white versus black, light versus dark, freedom versus rules), noting how contrasts are actually interdependent rather than exclusive

>>> Multiplying Readings or Interpretations of Cultural Artifacts

* **Reading Texts Variouslly:** reading and re-reading from differing disciplinary perspectives (sociological, psychological, philosophical, aesthetic, scientific, etc.).

* **Re-interpreting Stories, Novels, Movies:** generating new or unfamiliar interpretations of the significance of commonly familiar events, stories, films, books, paintings, song lyrics.

>>> Practicing Contrasting Perspectives and Methods

* **Alternate Descriptive Modes:** practice shifting from emphasis upon objective to subjective, abstract to concrete, denotative to connotative, literal to metaphorical, reductive to non-reductive ('it is this' vs 'it is these') references.

***Alternate Evaluative Modes**: select actions or conditions and compare results of applying criteria such as good vs. bad with efficient vs. inefficient, ethical vs. necessary, proper vs. improper, ideal vs. real, personally appealing vs. unappealing.

***Alternate Explanatory Modes**: practice defining 'how things work' by shifting from mechanically sequential to non-linearly concurrent narrations of actions and interaction.

***Confounding of Established Opinions and Beliefs**: identify topics about which one has habitual assumptions then assert unfamiliar, contradictory, and paradoxical perspectives upon these, making an attempt to appreciate and validate those (topics like abortion, capital punishment, drug use, economic equality, religion, etc.).

***Contrast Formal and Informal Logic Use**: define and apply these often confused modes of exclusively self-consistent rationalism and broadly logical reasoning to overtly experience difference between knowing logically by certainty vs. by approximation.

***Contrast Intellectual Honesty with Rhetorical Persuasion**: practice discourse while alternating between commitment to the most honest expressions of all one's reasoning and knowledge of established factors on the one hand (intellectual honesty) and a primary intention to 'win the argument' on the other (rhetorical persuasion).

>>> **Multiplying Attention Orientations**

***Discontinuous Focus**: arrange novel conditions in which one must rapidly shift focus and type of attention. These can involve differing types of thinking and acting, from doing math, to reading poetry aloud, to visually tracking and remembering a sequence of displayed events.

***Concurrent Tracking**: create unfamiliar conditions in which two or more differing 'streams' of activity and information are being presented concurrently. This can involve efforts such as listening to different styles of music simultaneously, attempting to track what two or more people are saying concurrently, or observing an event or movie while reading a book at the same time.

***Non-Focal Attention**: expose awareness to complex environments while resisting focusing attention. These efforts can involve allowing oneself to wander aimlessly in a large mall or across a landscape, wandering an art museum without allowing attention to focus on any single picture or sculpture, participate in unorganized group activity such as speaking or acting-out unplanned words and gestures.

***Concurrent Observation and Response**: attend closely to unfolding events or stream of information such as movie, game, music and simultaneously write, discuss, or draw in response to what is being observed.

* **Practices of Physical and Somatic Re-Orientation**

This category focuses upon efforts that primarily challenge habits of perception, locomotion, and coordination. Diversifying engagement of physiological and

neurological functions is suggested because it can alter mental experience of self, others, and world.

>>> Sensory Ratio Alterations:

**Sensory Deprivation*: being led around while blindfolded, wearing ear plugs, conversing in dark rooms, walking at night without a light, floating in water in darkness, using smell or touch to identify objects, foods, people without vision.

**Exposing Body to Extremes*: exposure to contrasts of cold and hot, motion and stillness, extended exertion, fasting.

>>> Postural or Locomotive Alterations:

**Interruption of Habitual Posture and Carriage*: identify habitual traits then exaggerate contrasts by emphasizing unused muscles and joints, assuming unfamiliar postural attitudes

**Locomotive Exaggerations and Challenge*: amplify familiar and habitual movements then contrasting with unfamiliar ones (walking with increased knee and hip flexion; rocking hips side to side while moving one shoulder forward, other back w/ each stride, use crutches).

>>> Novel Coordination and Athletic Activities:

**Unfamiliar Sport or Exercise*: eye<>hand coordination sport, dancing, yoga, Tai Chi.

**Reversing Dominance*: 'playing left handed,' walking backwards.
month; forego foods or drugs that are craved in some disciplined

**Differentiating Body Awareness*: sequential flexions of muscles from finger tips, up arms, down torso and legs to toes;

* Practices of Mind <> Body Re-Orientations

This section concerns shifts in habitual thinking and doing that prompt awareness of how both must cooperatively adjust to different conditions of expectation, method, and execution. In general, the aim here is to provoke integration of unfamiliar cognitive and physiological processes concurrently.

>>> Practicing Ritual Gestures/Enactments

**Specifying Places and Times for Symbolic Acts*: designating contexts devoted to 'making meaningful gestures' that are explicitly symbolic actions, rather than typically practical ones.

>>> Altering Practices of Familiar Activities:

**Altering rules of Games*: emphasize style over winning, cooperation over competition, extended rallies over scoring; allow only backhands, or goal shots on immediate passes, count only near misses

**Shifting Conceptions and Enactments of Erotic Relations:* recontext motives for, meanings of, approaches to such encounters

**Altering Diet and Consumption:* limit volumes and types of food, resist habitual preferences, fast one day a week or a weekend once a month.

>>> Making Things in Unfamiliar Ways:

**Shifting Established Goals and Methods:* switch from practical to whimsical objects, or vice versa; try unfamiliar materials, techniques, styles; work without plans, improvise from available materials; incorporate found objects and chance selection of elements.

>>> Time and Space Disruptions

**Traveling without Typical Expectations or Methods:* forego maps, clocks, itineraries, reservations, destinations; use chance to direct movements, get deliberately lost.

**Change Daily Habits:* alter routines and practices to provoke altered sense of proportions to times of day, relations to distance (walking rather than driving, use watch every other day, estimate time by sun).

**Altering Speeds of Activity, Perception, and Expression:* sustain periods of exceptionally rapid or slow activity, conversation, and perception (slow motion walking and talking; listening to music or watching film played slower or faster than usual, try to type as fast as you think, think no faster than you can write, impose collective pauses between each persons statements in a conversation).

>>> Entraining Voice, Mind, Body

**Combining Sounds, Actions, and Thoughts into Sustained Repetitive Gesture:* i.e., create an association between chanting, contemplating some concept, and an activity such as walking, painting, or gardening then notice effects of repetition (might be trance-like).

>>> Sustained Endurance or Stress Routines:

**Elective Reduction or Suspension of Consumption:* fasting in either a limited or extreme manner; resisting habitual use of intoxicants.

**Elective Participation in Specific Context of Stress:* sleep deprivation or regular interruption; challenging comfort zones with extremes such as continual movement, heat and dark (as in traditional Native American sweat lodge).

**Pilgrimage by Way of One's Own Physical Effort:* walking, rowing, and bicycling journeys for symbolic or aesthetic motives.

**Vigil under Exceptional Circumstances:* extending waking attention beyond typical contexts and durations, particularly for purposes of developing unusual awareness (staying awake all night on special event like birthday, war anniversary, or solstice to contemplate unusual significance, engaging 'vision quest' type rituals).

>>>Engaging Pain and Discomfort

* *Pain Meditations*: extended focus of concentration on bodily discomforts with efforts to notice any associations of thoughts, concepts, emotions; attempts to 'be with' rather than 'escape' pain.

* *Promoting and Sustaining Distressing Activity*: generating uncomfortable or painful activity for the sake of extended experience of it.

* Practices of Expressive and Representational Re-Orientation

This grouping concerns ways for provoking a greater range of styles for meaning-making in self-expression.

>>>Changes in Language Usage, Style

**Shift from Nouns to Verbs*: seek to describe things and events in primarily active ways rather than as static states and entities.

**Adopting Lyrical or Poetic Style*: using verse forms, stream of consciousness, metaphoric style, allegory, and symbolic imagery.

**Attempt Utterly Literalistic, Mechanistically Functionalist Language*: describe everything as sequentially linear, material, in definitive processes.

**Compare Assumed Word Meanings with Dictionary Definitions and Etymological Origins*: challenge self and others about with the variousness of meanings for common terms, concepts by stating assume definition then investigating it.

>>> Attempt New Mode of Symbolic Representation

**Adopt an Unfamiliar Mode of Artistic Expression*: engage in and combine creative expressions such as painting, poetry, sculpture, movement, song, music, gardening, emphasizing symbolic, metaphorical, sensory, emotional references

**Alter Practical Habits to Favor Symbolic Significance*: rearrange activities, home or work environments, in relation to some significant feeling about symbolic connections rather than practical concerns.

>>> Varying Styles of Telling as Meaningful Medium

**Different Readings of Same Narrative or Text*: telling and retelling particular tales, poems, descriptive narratives with diverging emphasis, language usage, emotional color; tell different parts of same narrative in differing styles.

**Translate Descriptions and Stories into Differing Styles*: realism, surrealism, fairy tale, psychology, social theory, science fiction.

**Generate and Compare Song, Prose, Poetic, and Dance/Movement Expressions of an Event or Story*: use differing modes of expression or enactment to represent same narrative or represent a situation or image.

****Restatement and Re-signification of Habitual Assumptions:*** express accustomed views or interpretations in unfamiliar language, using unaccustomed metaphors or rationales.

>>> Varying Modes and Style of Responsive Interpretation

****Encourage and Compare Spontaneous Interpretations of Meaning:*** experimenting with unplanned, improvisational responses to and interpretations of art works, movies, current events, interpersonal relationships.

****Contrast Theoretical and Cultural References:*** shift from sociological to psychological to religious to scientific references for description and interpretive explanation, evaluation, or justification.

****In Kind Response:*** respond to other's behavior or expressions in similar mode, to emotion with emotion, to metaphor with metaphor, to paintings with painting, poetry with poem, image with image.

>>> Varying Performative Enactment

****Singing, Moving, Making Music 'Abnormally.'*** Chanting ordinarily spoken texts, acting dramatic roles under physical stress or with then without emotional emphasis, playing music atonally or with changing tempos, coloratura or 'scat' singing, dancing pragmatic actions.

>>> Prompting Group 'Chaotics'

****Collective Spontaneous Musicality:*** improvising non-directed rhythmic percussion, vocalization, and/or movement, to experience emergent moments of 'chaotic self-ordering.'

****Collective Metamorphosis from Autonomy to Collaboration:*** groups experimenting with transitions from non-interaction to interaction, competition to cooperation in movement, conversation, construction, by alternating periods of all following a plan or one person with moments of autonomy; working toward a goal or conclusion without intermediate plan.

*** Cooperative Practices of Communicative and Relational Re-Orientation**

These methods address ways to elaborate more 'lateral interaction' in contrast to oppositional competition or hierarchical direction.

>>> Shifting Basis for Collective Discourse

****Practice 'Goalless' Cooperative Discourse:*** engage group conversation for purpose of elaborating further understanding of whatever subject comes up, rather than to assert authority, argument, personal interest, or definitive conclusions ("Bohmian Dialogue").

>>> Engage in Collective Composition of Texts, 'Art,' Symbolic Actions

**Sequential Improvisational Composition of Poems, Stories, Songs*: pass a paper around with each person writing a phrase or sentence that is folded over so next person does not see it to create an unplanned 'collective work.'

**Simultaneously Construct a Symbolic Object or Enactment*: collectively create sculptural or architectural form from found or available materials without a plan (or a very general one); engage in creating a set of verbal or gestural interactions in response to a shared image or concept.

>>> Intuitively Directed Group Efforts

**Collaborative Actions and Manipulation of Objects without Direction*: unplanned group effort to perform actions simultaneously (moving to same spot from differing distances in differing ways, walking same speed but some forward, some backward); 5 or more people seek to uniformly lift long pole or stick each with one finger under it.

>>> Contractual Agreement on Conditions for Types of Discourse

**Designating Times and Modes of Expressing Specific Feelings, Thoughts*: such as commitment to limiting argument and criticism to a set time (as in once a week), when each gets one turn for stating feelings and judgments with no interruption or rebuttal allowed—any expression might be permitted, but only during the specified sessions and not outside these; setting regular occasions to express affirmations and appreciations in similar manner.

**Alternating Pragmatically Literalistic and Metaphorical Uses of Language*: agree to consider certain topics in one mode exclusively for a period then deliberately shift exclusively to the other while cooperating to maintain each extreme.

**Engaging Discussion only when Initiated with Non-Negating Expressions*: limit discourse to appreciative analytical commentary, attempting to notice and rephrase any negative judgements.

**Ritualizing Types of Relational Engagement*: specifying that certain feelings, such as conflict or erotic attraction, are to be engaged only by 'preparing a context' with specified gestures, postures, actions that 'open and close' a each particular engagement to induce a respectful context for such expressions.

>>> Generating and Practicing Ritual Gestures Collectively

**Group Gestures of Symbolic Response*: initiating metaphorical actions that evolve collectively in relation to specified stories, events, issues (such as a personal, social, or environmental concerns that people feel compelled to acknowledge).

>>> Collective Commitment to Elaboration and Unanimous Assessment

**Dynamic Analysis Process*: engage in expression of thoughts and feelings about a specific topic without restriction except a collective commitment to cooperatively

elaborating all dynamics of topic that can be observed—and then arrive at some mutually agreed upon statement about the broader significance of the topic (“Dynamic Facilitation” method).

>>>Displacement of Socio-Cultural Context for Communication & Understanding

**Inducing Culture Shock:* attempting to function in an unfamiliar social, economic, or ethnic context, either of one’s own society or during travel and work in a overtly foreign context, for the purpose of tracking effects upon mental and physical habits (particularly as a group that can observe each other in the extra-ordinary context).

* Practices of Imaginal Re-Orientation

Here are grouped methods of activating the relationship between overtly imaginal consciousness and a sense of ‘virtual experience.’ This effort involves placing practical waking awareness into a direct involvement with ‘imaginal reality.’ The intention here is to generate a tangible sensing of ‘psychic reality,’ rather than indulge in an abstract fantasy or literalized delusion. To accomplish that maneuver requires contexting the ‘encounter’ in terms of symbolic actuality. Thus the literalistic pragmatism of ordinary consciousness must be positioned to accept the reality of imaginal experience not in terms of material objects and mechanical causation, but in terms of the ‘psyche’s metamorphic dynamism,’ or the ‘inclusively non-reductive logic of the mind’s radical complexity.’ Such experiences can be profoundly meaningful without ‘making ordinary sense.’

>>> Guided Imaginations of Being Elsewhere and Becoming Other

**Imagining Presence and Encounters in Archetypal Environments:* a ‘guide’ provides narratives of simple event sequences in specific types of environments (urban, forest, desert, ‘underworld’) for people to listen to while practicing attention to ‘being there’ in a sensually actual imagination, emphasizing attentiveness to ‘what presents itself’ (usually done with eyes closed for sessions under 20 minutes).

**Imagining Alternative Embodiments:* practice feeling metamorphic change of ordinary embodiment into states of ‘otherness,’ including conditions of extra-ordinary composites and conditions (animal and mineral status, dynamic processes such as ‘being the river,’ ‘supernatural’ or ‘monstrous’ conditions of human/non-human hybrids).

>>> Spontaneously Responsive Active Imagination

**Imaginal Body Practices:* allow unplanned images of altered embodiment to arise in consciousness and practice feeling the becoming of those conditions, actions, or things.

***Imaginal Correspondence to Unconscious Material:* meditate upon images, moods, thoughts, dreams that seem to induce emotional reactions (fear, anger, confusion, anxiety, depression, disgust, weariness, repulsion) by allowing associations to arise and narratives to spontaneously unfold like ‘waking dreams’ that are regarded as ‘actual

phenomena.’ This effort can engender encounters with a ‘psychical reality’ to which waking consciousness has no other overt access (an induced hypnogogic state).

>>> **Dream Correspondence, Embodiment**

**Waking Re-imagination of Dream States*: bringing remembered dream contexts and narratives ‘to life’ as imaginal realities, particularly when presented to other persons intent upon assisting dreamer elucidating more detail and associations about aspects of the dreaming. The dreamer re-members the dreaming and others prompt more complex awareness of its aspects and the dreamer’s potential connections between these.

>>> **Chance and Oracular Consultation**

**Submitting Concerns and Choices to ‘Unconscious Commentary’*: engage ways of ‘getting a response’ to concerns that are not habitually reflexive or analytically rational by enabling more unconscious psychical expressions and seemingly random symbolic reflections (using hand-held pendulums to answer yes or no questions, Tarot decks readings, casting the I-Ching).

>>> **Explore Experiences of and Attractions to the ‘Uncanny’**

**Imaginal Exploration of ‘Strange Attractions’*: Identify past encounters and fascinations with extra-ordinary conditions or notions such as the monstrous, perverse, paranormal, ghostly, etcetera, that one can elaborate by allowing imagination of associated archetypal aspects and contexts. Track and respect any attendant responses of awe, fear or pleasure for subsequent reflection.

>>> **‘Sacrificing’ Symbolic Creativity as Psychic Activation**

**Imagine Symbolically Actual Images and Objects to Create and Destroy*: actually build versions of imagined objects, practice imbuing these with ‘literally valid psychical significance,’ and then burn or destroy them with a sense of ‘activating’ of their psychical actuality.

* **Practices of Contextual and Environmental Re-Orientation**

The concern focused upon here involves how people’s lives become habitually structured and ordered by reference to external factors in environment and society. In various ways, attitudes and awareness tend to become dependent upon, or automatically reactive to regularly encountered aspects of physical and social environments. The resulting reflexive traits of thought, feeling, and behavior can become the dominant mode of a person’s being—even though he or she might not realize the extent of such habituation. There are a variety of ways one can attempt to re-orient one’s interactions with social and environmental contexts. These generally involve establishing some time or place dedicated to reflection upon and departure from those ordinary responses and priorities. Such effort can be considered making places to engage extra-ordinary aspects of relations with self, others, and world.

>>> Consecrating Non-Ordinary Space and Time

**Drawing a Line Between the Worlds*: ‘casting a circle’ by designating a context that is ‘outside’ of ordinarily sequential space/time (‘places of practicing diversification’) in which attempts are made to practice experience of concurrent multiplicities and interactivities of phenomena (in/as self, other, & world).

**Practicing Pausing to Acknowledge Symbolic Eruptions of Consciousness*: interrupting dominance of ordinarily defined and ordered sense of reality to respectfully note and consider the strange imaginal, metaphorical images and associations that the mind ‘throws up,’ whether in the middle of habituated thinking, waking reverie, or sleep dreaming that one tries to remember.

>>> Constructing Thresholds of Attention to Extra-Ordinary Concerns & Dynamics

**Making Altars and Shrines*: designating small or large places specifically as nexes of attention to more-than-ordinary dynamics, paradoxical or ambivalent feelings and thoughts, efforts to live in greater awareness of unconscious and unacknowledged ‘forces,’ the making ‘offerings’ of symbolic objects.

**Making Symbolic Structures*: Building sculptural and architectural forms specifically as thresholds to, or expressions of, extra-ordinarily complex, metamorphic dynamics of experience and identity. The making of altars and shrines can be approached as this activity.

>>> Evolving Place/Time Specific Ritualized Engagement with the Complexities of Places & People

**Practices of Greeting and Parting*: Cooperate in improvising gestures, actions, speech that acknowledge the uncertainties and confusions of interrupting or re-engaging in relations.

**Seasonal Departures from Ordinary Relations with Nature*: Allowing aspects of annual cosmological and natural cycles to take precedence over social order and personal priorities by imposing days of departure from ordinary attitudes, actions, concerns (as on solstices).

**Establishing ‘Counter Gestures’ in Relation to Affirmations of Ordinary Status*: Engaging in at least momentary symbolic reflections on and expressions of chaotic background dynamics when enacting ordinarily reductive procedures and assumptions—such as defining things in quantitative terms, scheduling life ‘by the clock,’ traveling only to arrive, eating food as if it were ‘fuel’ or had never been alive.

*** Practices of Life Stage Re-Orientations**

This last category addresses activating attention to the psychological significance of prominent transitions in succeeding life stages. This involves how one’s activities and thoughts interact with one’s ‘metamorphic ontology’ from birth to death. Various

occasions of life's transitions were once principle concerns for traditions involving symbolic ritualization in archaic cultures. Such societies overtly acknowledged radical changes in identity and roles related to maturing and aging. That required actions constituting imaginal expressions of the psychic realities implied human development's genuinely metamorphic. The paradoxical, emotionally charged concerns of life tend to become heightened at transition points such as births, puberty, entering adulthood, commencement of sexual relations, marriage, parenting, an of parenting, and entry to what was once a status of 'elderhood.'

>>> Symbolizing the Paradoxical Nature of Life Transitions

**Enacting Dynamic Qualities of Identity Changes:* engaging in symbolic and emotionally expressive gestures that 'give embodied expression to' how life stage changes involve an experience of 'death and rebirth,' or 'becoming some one else' while still 'being one's self.'

**Engaging Complexities and Confusion of Metamorphic Transition:* deliberately acknowledging the contradictions and qualities of being 'neither this nor that' or 'both this and that,' with sincerely symbolic expressions and actions.

>>> Contexting Life Transitions as Shifts in Epistemic Capacity

**Differentiating Ways of Knowing Relevant to Life Stages:* emphasizing, by way of demonstration and imaginal reality, the opposed and correspondent qualities of relatively reductive, pragmatic emphasis versus non-reductive, metaphorically symbolic emphasis in relation to conditions of development from childhood through adulthood.

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These comments are merely notations on some of the possible elements to be engaged in efforts to stimulate shifts in human awareness by diversifying its cognitive strategies and modes of expression. These are being offered in part as an acknowledgement that contemporary societies have abandoned serious ritualized attention to 'more than ordinary consciousness.'

Some historical perspective upon the decline of the types of activities listed above is available on the **Images and Enactments** page of this website.