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### *Teaching-Story Work, Quantum Storytelling, & the Reunion with Horse Sense*

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Abstract: Few, if any, constructs carry emotional resonance more than *home*. Even displaced animals and migratory species exhibit the magnetic power; humans can spend their lifetime in quest of the *eternal return* (Eliade, 1949/1954). *Home* resonates with the electric entanglements of being (ontology) and knowing (epistemology, phenomenology, even metaphysics). The home of knowing and learning can be argued as *situated* in time and place (Lave & Wenger, 1991) or as dispersed across levels of explanation (universal, local, and individual) alchemizing into the particular level or situated experience (Boyd, 2009, on 4 levels, possibly drawn from Husserl). In finding and constructing *home*, our view and enactment of storytelling features a person's connection with *the sense you are born with* or *horse sense*. Increased capacity with this sense allows a person to mediate time and space because the *homing instinct* tunes up, even makes adjustments to changes in environment, culture, and those within the individual.

In our *Good Stories* course, college students practice locating and refining this sense as they engage oral tales and construct digital media productions that explore their personal identity/identities, destiny, and social responsibility. In McCaleb's *Reins of Power* programs, participants adventure into the mirror of experience with horses; and with the assistance of coaching, they translate the human-horse experience into personal and social applications, especially involving the making of digital media. The processes in *Good Stories* and *Reins of Power* are articulated and connected to work in phenomenology (particularly Heidegger, Levinas, Merleau-Ponty, and van Manen) as well as insight gained from Jung's application of alchemy to human psychology.

*Teaching-Story Work, Quantum Storytelling, & the Reunion with Horse Sense*Joseph McCaleb & Thor Gibbins<sup>1</sup>

Is there any time, space, or mattering  
for exploring the mystery of storytelling  
better than true tales of falling in love?

Datable #1. Once, for the umpteenth time, back in June 1989, falling-in-love happened at the Great Mother Conference (GMC).<sup>2</sup> Some instinct (or maybe it was my fundamentalist upbringing) told me to run for my life at that first whiff of the conference mystique in the Maine woods buzzing with vampire mosquitoes bigger than Texas, but I let “friends” persuade me to stay at least the first night. As any story lover would’ve known, I was soon beguiled in the week-long conference, entranced with tabla and sitar playing, poets reciting ecstatic lines, and the storytelling of Arthurian romance. Dazed in such space, love was easily transferred onto a woman. Within a couple of years, the lady had disappeared while the spell continued, transforming me into a storyteller. Some magic might’ve been afoot, yet it also took a lot of work. For most of the 90’s I attended to the annual conference and returned home where I’d labor through transcribing tapes of the featured storyteller. The stories connected easily enough with my teaching, but learning to tell them goes with the great stories, never-ending. Along the way, the world shifted, and I’m still in love with that kind of storytelling.

Datable #2. Another time, I left everything to ride horseback beside the one who stole my heart. About a year later, the slow, steady, deeply rewarding journey into natural horsemanship had moved into the center. Grudgingly at first, I accepted love must have that in mind all along and I’d just confused it with another disappearing woman. It became clear enough that the love affair with horses carried the ecstatic, played the balancing act, and offered inspiration. It still does.

Datable #3. At age 6, way before seatbelts, I fell out of a moving car when the door had sprung open, and I lay unconscious for three days. According to what Mom told me years later, the doctors said there was nothing they could do. She’d then told me a story about Epaminondas, and soon enough I woke up. Some call it a “nonsense tale,” but it plays out over and over in my life with continuing revelations about living story and “horse sense.” It’s a love story, too, about a special kind of knowing.

*Datability*<sup>3</sup> offers a good place to start. Situating these “Little Wow Moments”<sup>4</sup> offers the grounding and flavor for my Teaching-Story Work.<sup>5</sup> In the sense that LWMs

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph and Thor have collaborated on this paper. Joseph narrates most of the paper in first person based on his experiences including the design and instruction of the *Good Stories* course. Thor has been assisting with *Good Stories* and is now studying this course. Extracts from Thor’s dissertation proposal are clearly marked in this paper. Collaborative insights are usually marked with plural references: “our” and “we.”

<sup>2</sup> History and information on the Great Mother Conference is available at the conference website: <http://greatmotherconference.org/about>.

<sup>3</sup> Datability is one of the 12 Ds in David Boje’s *Quantum Storytelling*; hereafter abbreviated *QS*. *QS* is available through <http://peaceaware.com/>. Boje opens *QS* with relevant *datables*.

focus “timespacemattering,”<sup>6</sup> they also provide a connection from Teaching-Story Work to David Boje’s Quantum Storytelling. Both TSW and QS acknowledge roots in phenomenology; and in both, datability textures direct personal experiences that carry significance beyond the immediate moment. Datable moments and events “stand out as living stories that are life-changing.”<sup>7</sup> While fronting personal experience risks being and/or being perceived as self-indulgent, sharing datable moments offers one vital key to establishing common life-worlds and perhaps to the doing of TSW as well as to QS.

Decades after discovering and reconstructing my identity so that it constellated around storyteller/horseman, both labels still leave me with “huh?” That’s not who I thought I am or who I’d be. Yet, now centering my professional life is a course called *Good Stories*, and it features me performing as a particular kind of storyteller. The course also bridges across three media: oral tales, print text, and digital media production. Equally surprising, my professional/personal life cycles around a regular source for balancing and rebalancing: time with horses. As connected with many of the Ds of Quantum Storytelling, this timespacemattering engages the perpetual quest for “true unity” where horsemanship leads the way and where gnosis holds the mystery.

In order to discuss these databilities and the associated timespacematterings, several questions provide an organizational flow:

What is the legacy of Sufi “teaching-stories”?

What is the nature of storytelling as experienced in the Great Mother Conference?

What is the nature of storytelling as enacted in the Good Stories course?

Why isn’t the considerable potential available in teaching-stories being accessed?

How might “mattering” contribute to more persons reaching into the potential?

### **The Legacy of Sufi Teaching-Stories**

While not overtly religious and certainly not proselytizing, the Great Mother Conference suffused with Sufi culture and with the broader gnostic character. Versions of Rumi’s poetry<sup>8</sup> were often featured, frequently with live tabla and sitar intermingling. The gnostic heritage with its affirmation of direct access to deep levels of knowing provides a rich context for teaching-stories. A decade or two after attending that first GMC, still deep into translating the mythopoetic movement into my teaching, professional and personal life, the works of Idries Shah<sup>9</sup> began filling a prominent place

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<sup>4</sup> Boje, *QS*, 73, on *LWM* (Little Wow Moments): “The subatomic storytelling quantum storytelling waves connect past to future, but blinds us to the Situation, to the Now and Here LWMs. Uncovering the LWMs of the Past is as important as uncovering ones the Present, and in the Future. As the Now shifts, LWMs of the past become noticeable, because they carry lessons and clues for the Now.”

<sup>5</sup> *Teaching-Story Work* (abbreviated TSW) is a working term for the essential feature of my engagement with story, specifically in the *Good Stories* course as described later in the paper. TSW overlaps with QS. TSW stresses the importance of nurturing the “hit” or visceral resonance available in story/experience. This “hit” or “little wow moment” is key to my work in *Good Stories*, as is being explicated in Thor Gibbins’ dissertation, elaborated later in this paper.

<sup>6</sup> Boje attributes the term “timespacemattering” to Karen Barad.

<sup>7</sup> Boje, *QS*, p. 15.

<sup>8</sup> Coleman Barks attributes his launch into the world of Rumi to the encouragement of Robert Bly. Coleman regularly participated in the GMC during the time I attended.

<sup>9</sup> See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teaching\\_stories](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teaching_stories) for information; for the USA distributor of Shah’s works, see: [http://www.ishkbooks.com/books/books\\_shah\\_catalog.html](http://www.ishkbooks.com/books/books_shah_catalog.html).

on my bookshelf, not far from the volumes on archetypal psychology, particularly those of Marie Louise von Franz.

I knew that the storytelling that had entranced me at the GMC was distinctively different from what I detected in all other storytelling performances and storytelling texts that I'd encountered. It was the only enactment that I was certain was "not just entertainment."<sup>10</sup> In reading Idries Shah, I found articulation of the distinctions and even a name for the kind of story I held close. The best brief elaboration of "the teaching-story" that I've found is in the middle of a collection of stories, *Caravan of Dreams* (1968) and leads into the story "The Magic Horse" (which relates to a later section of this paper):

The teaching-story was brought to perfection as a communication instrument many thousands of years ago. The fact that it has not developed greatly since then has caused people obsessed by some theories of our current civilization to regard it as the product of less enlightened time. They feel that it must surely be little more than a literary curiosity, something fit for children, the projection, perhaps, of infantile desires, a means of enacting a wish-fulfilment.

Hardly anything could be further from the truth of such pseudo-philosophical, certainly unscientific, imaginings. Many teaching-stories *are* entertaining to children and to naïve peasants. Many of them in the forms in which they are viewed by conditioned theorists have been so processed by unregenerate amateurs that their effective content is distorted. Some apply only to certain communities, depending upon special circumstances for their correct unfolding: circumstances whose absence effectively prevents the action of which they are capable.

So little is known to the academics, the scholars and the intellectuals of this world about these materials, that there is no word in modern languages which has been set aside to describe them.<sup>11</sup>

But the teaching-story exists, nevertheless. It is a part of the most priceless heritage of mankind.

Real teaching-stories are not to be confused with parables; which are adequate enough in their intention, but still on a lower level of material, generally confined to the inculcation of moralistic principles, not the assistance of interior movement of the human mind. What we often take on the lower level of parable, however, can sometimes be seen by real specialists as teaching-stories; especially when experienced under the correct conditions.

Unlike the parable, the meaning of the teaching-story cannot be unraveled by ordinary intellectual methods alone. Its action is direct and certain, upon the innermost part of the human being, an action incapable of manifestation by means of the emotional or intellectual apparatus.

The closest that we can come to describing its effect is to say that it connects with a part of the individual which cannot be reached by any other convention,

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<sup>10</sup> Leslie Marmon Silko opens *Ceremony* with a passionate affirmation of the vital role of story including the lines "I will tell you something about stories, they aren't just entertainment. They're all we have to fight off sickness and death."

<sup>11</sup> When my course proposal for Good Stories: Teaching Narratives for Peace & Justice went through the Program & Course Review process at the university, the word "teaching" was removed from the title. Apparently the term "teaching-narrative" or "teaching-story" was considered redundant, certainly not acknowledged as a legitimate term.

and that it establishes in him or in her a means of communication with a non-verbalized truth beyond the customary limitations of our familiar dimensions.

Some teaching-stories cannot now be reclaimed because of the literary and traditionalistic, even ideological, processing to which they have been subjected. The worst of such processes is the historicising one, where a community comes to believe that one of their former teaching-stories represents literal historical truth.<sup>12</sup>

Shah is quoted at length because this is the most concentrated statement I've found to express the essential nature of teaching-stories that is also at the heart of the purpose of *Good Stories*. Although difficult to capture in a few words, Shah hits home with "the closest that we can come to describing its effect is to say that it connects with a part of the individual which cannot be reached by any other convention, and that it establishes in him or in her a means of communication with a non-verbalized truth beyond the customary limitations of our familiar dimensions." In my professional work, the enactment of teaching-stories has been most developed in the *Good Stories* course and in a horsemanship program I've developed called *Reins of Power*.

### **The Great Mother Conference with Featured Storyteller Gioia Timpanelli**

As noted in Datability #1, precision of note taking did not characterize my condition during that first GMC that I attended, but I still have a clear recollection of being stunned with the quality of Gioia Timpanelli's storytelling. Although mostly inarticulate at the time, the experience it provided so impressed me because it surpassed all other criteria for excellence in teaching (and I was well read on "teaching effectiveness" as well as publishing in that area). My experience in Gioia's story world in 1989 might fit nicely in Shah's explication cited above: "the teaching-story cannot be unraveled by ordinary intellectual methods alone. Its action is direct and certain, upon the innermost part of the human being, an action incapable of manifestation by means of the emotional or intellectual apparatus."

Robert Bly introduced Gioia at the 1994 GMC this way:

So then she really began in a way the whole tradition of storytelling here in this country and she did for television the first long series of fairy tales year ago and has gone around the country teaching how to tell stories. She tells them in a Sicilian way. Her grandmother was a Sicilian storyteller and the stories are not memorized. You simply look in your heart that day and find the phrasing that comes forward and you remain in the moment, not in any memorized detail. So she is the greatest storyteller in the country. I have no doubt about it at all.<sup>13</sup>

As often happens in significant experience, words fall short of capturing the essential quality, but articulation adds to understanding. Bly's emphasis on remaining ("dwelling"<sup>14</sup>) "in the moment" connects with key features of Quantum Storytelling as does the act or being that's involved in the "look in the heart that day." This allows

<sup>12</sup> Idries Shah, *Caravan of Dreams*, pp. 95-96. Much of Shah's work is being made available in videos: <https://www.youtube.com/user/idriesshah999?feature=g-user>

<sup>13</sup> Transcribed from GMC conference tapes, 1995.

<sup>14</sup> Dwelling is another of Boje's Ds in Quantum Storytelling. For Heidegger, dwelling or dwelling-in is an ontological mode of being-in-the-world. Temporality and Care are important features of dwelling.

phrasing to come forward, and it reflects Gioia's self-description of her enactment of storytelling. She says she never knows in advance just what she will say and that she never tells the exact story twice. The telling always is tuning in to timespacemattering, and (as we'll discuss in a bit) her telling weaves across several levels of explanation, going in and out of the story line so that the universal or archetypal level is opening, inviting the individual in:

Would you like to hear now why Arthur left his country and his castle at Carlisle?<sup>15</sup> He followed the counsel of his retinue. So even the center moves. Especially the center moves. Once it is the center. This running here and there to what good is it unless you are carrying the center with you. Or unless you are looking for Lady Adventure and trust that she will bring you to your place. That's what we're hoping here.

O.K. Now.

One of the things is that I'm the kind of storyteller because I do it extemporaneously and I never know what I'm going to say, what's going to happen or anything. I need time to get my body and my head. . . I waste time . . . so that I can get in a place where I can tell a story. . . I don't do it purposely. I do nothing purposely. It's not a device. It's nothing I've thought of. It's just that I'm describing to you what I feel and what almost after the fact the way I tell a story. It's all after the fact or running up. I'm like a fool running up next to it. That's really how it is. The truth. . .

So what happens is you just take the stories and you take the master who is Wolfram [von Eschenbach<sup>16</sup>] and you figure it out and think it through and you go through your own system. Then you might get a lesser poem but at least it would be ours. You see, that's the point. And it's always better that it be ours than to be anyone else's unless you know nothing at all. Then it's better it's theirs and you better just read it. That's the truth.

O.K. Even if it's half-assed it's ok but if you're not doing that, but, and, every time you go back to the source anyway. Always.<sup>17</sup>

Most times when I try to describe my storytelling I credit Gioia Timpanelli as my model, and I consider that I apprenticed under her direction (although it was not a formal arrangement). In my early attempts to develop as a storyteller in this tradition, I told the same stories I'd heard her tell and that I'd transcribed and studied from her sources. I didn't memorize the text, but my version closely modeled upon hers.

As typical of learning a craft,<sup>18</sup> perhaps an art also, over time my own style came through, influenced also by reading Idries Shah. Even when I tell that story of "The Weddyng of Sir Gawaine & Dame Ragnelle"<sup>19</sup> (which was the one that first mesmerized me in 1989), our versions are now quite distinct in their text, while I trust they remain akin in the heart of the story. I continually hold dear Gioia's direction: tell our own truth

<sup>15</sup> See <http://www.britannia.com/history/arthur/carlisle.html> .

<sup>16</sup> See <http://www.nd.edu/~gantho/anth164-353/Wolfram164-175.html> for example. Gioia was preparing to tell her version of a part of the Parzival story and Eschenbach was her "source."

<sup>17</sup> My transcription from GMC tape of 1994.

<sup>18</sup> The work of Jean Lave on apprenticeship, especially her *Situated Learning*, offers to radically reform notions of privilege in education.

<sup>19</sup> See <http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/teams/ragnell.htm> for a source text.

while simultaneously, even when it feels paradoxical, staying true to the source. Of course, the *source* offers a wonderful mystery to inspire the telling.

### Teaching-Story-Work in the *Good Stories* Course

#### Situating *Good Stories* in Phenomenology.

Speaking of apprenticeship, doctoral candidate Thor Gibbins has been closely involved in the first three years of this general studies course, *Good Stories: Teaching Narratives for Peace & Justice*.<sup>20</sup> Thor decided to study the course for his doctoral dissertation. The following section comes from his dissertation proposal and provides a perspective on how the course constructs in line with Shah's teaching-story and Gioia's model. It also connects TSW with QS. Thor writes:

Heidegger's (1962) analytic of Care as a result of our being thrown into a world means, for me, "that Being gets to me," which means that being calls to me. My way of being seeks to use story as method to transmit a peaceful and just narrative, which heralds the arrival of my caring and seeking for understandings of digital stories mediated through digital places. I am compelled to investigate the class on storytelling for peace and justice because it creates an exigent role for narrative and digital narratives in particular. It requires students to move beyond the autobiographical celebration of their own lived-experiences into projecting stories to better not only their own communities, but to act as counterfactuals to other dominant narratives designed to coerce and oppress.

My advisor, Joseph McCaleb, who created and teaches this storytelling course and credits storyteller Idries Shah for the term, calls these types of stories teaching-stories: stories we use to teach and learn. In order to move story into a teaching-narrative, the story must have the capacity to be transformative for the teller and the audience. The experience of telling and listening to teaching-stories must provide a space allowing both audiences and storytellers to see the possibilities for projecting their own narratives for peace and justice. This requires the individual to transform herself into an agent, or individual, with the purpose of disseminating positive change within her community.

C.G. Jung (1963/1970) likens this transformation to the individuation of a coherent "whole" self, a capable well functioning individual capable of projecting positive change into her community. Jung uses alchemy as the guiding principle of the psychological development of individuation. Alchemists describe the process to heal disease or extend life as the creation of the Philosopher's Stone:

The Philosopher's Stone is a concept that describes the most sophisticated psychology a person could ever hope to achieve. Accordingly, changing lead into gold psychologically means transforming our base, unconscious nature (symbolized by lead and called the prima material) into the philosopher's stone. (Cavelli, 2002, p. 21)

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<sup>20</sup> Good Stories entered the curriculum as part of the University of Maryland's strategic plan to transform the General Education requirements, including the creation of classes with a "unique signature—or brand." "I-Series classes are about "important issues that spark the imagination, demand intellect, inspiration, and innovation and conclude where feasible with real-world implementation. The I-Series inverts the traditional pedagogical pyramid. Rather than starting with a survey of existing knowledge, the I-Series courses offer Maryland students an opportunity to view large problems from defined disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives." <http://www.gened.umd.edu/i-series/iseriess-about.php>.

Cavelli continues to point out that our symbolic and alchemical relationship to fire is “our awareness and our capacity to change all that we see and touch” (p. 9), which alludes to how our narratives can change our lifeworld. However, these narratives have the potential for benevolence or malevolence. As educators, we should want all our students to aspire to tell ameliorating narratives that heal our lifeworlds. However, not all individuals will aspire to tell healing narratives; some may aspire to manipulate and trick others like many email scams using stories of foreign “princes” seeking help to transfer their “wealth.” In what ways are students able to perceive ameliorating or coercive narratives? Does their experience in critically looking at the different levels of narrative (Boyd, 2010), archetypal, social/cultural, individual, and particular, allow students to be able to reflect upon and deconstruct the important narratives in their lives in order to determine or evaluate narratives as the transmuted “golden” narratives used to teach others? A person’s individuated narrative, a narrative that has undergone the alchemical transmutation turning into a “golden” narrative, has the potential to project a teaching-story capable of healing and extending not only the lives of others, but the quality of lives as well. This is a critical function in today’s digitized world, where narratives can be spread “virally” almost instantaneously through the *networked publics*<sup>21</sup> interconnected globally via the Internet.

#### **Elaboration of the Four Levels.**

The central textbooks for *Good Stories* are Idries Shaw’s *World Tales* and Brian Boyd’s *On the Origin of Stories: Evolution, Cognition, and Fiction*. In the first half of his book, Boyd traces the place of art, with special emphasis given to story and storytelling, in the evolution of species, particularly humans. He asserts that the capacities to cooperate and to create are late developments and these are especially informed by and practiced in play with story. In the second half of the book, he applies and illustrates his themes in two works of literature: *The Odyssey* and *Horton Hears a Who!* The four levels of explanation are stated:

I propose four interconnected levels of explanation appropriate to Dr. Seuss’s story of any other work of literature: a *universal* level, which considers aspects of human nature in general; a *local* level, which focuses on particular cultural, historical, social, economic, technological, intellectual, or artistic contexts; an *individual* level, which assesses the dispositions and experience of an author or, alternatively of a reader or critic); and a *particular* level, which examines the specific problem situation of the author composing *this* story, or of a reader reading it in a certain situation (for the first time or the *n*th time) or for a given purpose. (p. 322)

Boyd summarizes the levels in a concluding chapter.

Evocriticism (“a biocultural or evolutionary approach to fiction”) “can offer the widest possible explanatory perspective, on, say, the evolution of cooperation (the

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<sup>21</sup> boyd (2007) defines *networked publics* as online places that have different interactions than face-to-face encounters. There are four characteristics of *networked publics*: persistence, searchability, exact copyability, and invisible audiences. These characteristics will play a significant role in describing digital architecture and the place of digital story.



*universal* level) without neglecting the historical or regional circumstances (the *local* level: the institution of *xenia* in the *Odyssey* or the reintroduction of democracy in Japan in *Horton Hears a Who!*), or the individuality of the author (the *individual* level: problematic in Homer's case, given our uncertainty about his identity, pervasive and intense in Dr. Seuss's), or the *particular* problems and solutions the author faces in *this* work, to secure an audience both by building on the appeal of other works in its tradition and by ensuring the many surprises *this* work offers within that tradition. . . The evolutionary approach . . . takes seriously the idea that the complex emerges out of the simple, mostly building slowly, by minute increments, in the design of species (the universal), in cultural tradition (the local) in personal development (the individual), and in artistic composition and comprehension (the particular). It allows us to see art as part of an unbroken series of nested problems and solutions, from species to local to individual to particular impacts and implications. (pp. 389-390)

The significance of the tone of the Particular Level is indicated in Boyd's citation (p. 359) of Theodor Geisel (Dr. Seuss) on the situation in Japan that provoked *Horton Hears a Who!*: "the worst educational crime in the entire history of the world." This seems to match up the Particular Level with "timespacemattering." Also, as we have worked with the design and delivery of *Good Stories*, the Particular Level seems to offer and to express a constellation, a consolidation or perhaps an essence, of the other three levels.

In order to assist learners in working with multiple levels and also in drawing them together, we designed a "remix" assignment. Usually students are required to produce images of their own from drawings they make or photos they take, but in this one they can find items online or in magazines in order to construct a collage that shows a mixing of the levels. One sample I provided (see below) shows an abstracted photo of horse and rider (Leg'cy and me) as a representation from "The Mechanical Horse" (a winged horse is shown as representative of the Universal Level) with overlays of images reflecting the Local Level (cultural influence that contribute to understanding of the "beloved" or "the heart's desire" such as Hollywood stars) and the Individual Level (poster from *Dr. Zhivago* representing my infatuation with Julie Christie in the role of Lara).



While Boyd is our primary referent for the four levels, there are significant differences between his take on the levels and what we do in *Good Stories*. Our construction of the Particular Level involving consolidation of the other levels does not seem to be explicit or implied in Boyd’s account of the levels. Also, although he traces the art of storytelling in evolution, Boyd’s attention is primarily on written text (literature) and not at all on digital media production. Articulation of these levels can also be traced into work prior to Boyd’s, particularly that of Husserl on the universal and particular.<sup>22</sup>

The Four Levels are layered into *Good Stories* as a way to lead the students to engage oral stories on more than just the basic plot line. In a similar way to how Gioia interspersed commentary that opened the text making explicit archetypes, the oral telling that I do includes “asides,” especially in the opening lines and at times when the story I’m chasing along behind brings them forward. The weekly assignments and the three major assignments scaffold learners into articulating the multiple levels. This is evident in the summary and directions they are given for the final digital media production.

Our final DMP3 continues the development that has been advanced in the first two productions, and it’s fitting that parts of these productions also appear in the third and final production for *Good Stories*. DMP1 focused a point of resonance, especially in relation to identity (Individual Level). DMP2 amplified the resonance, extending the interaction between the Universal Level (felt in stories) and the Local Levels including one/s not primary to the individual. This

<sup>22</sup> See <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/husserl/> for Husserl’s attention to “universal” and “particular.” Aristotle’s *Poetics* also noted the significance of these levels in distinguishing genre. Also of interest is that Heidegger’s dedication in *Being and Time* is to Husserl.

amplification leads to complications around the resonant theme revealing questions of power, effectiveness, consequences, and other concerns for good/bad, weak/strong, right/wrong, and so on. The structure of DMP3 can be summarized: resonance, amplification, complication, and resolution.

The rubric for DMP3 shows the distribution of the 25 points, 3 in each of 7 areas, (Attention, Imagery, Flow, Form, Goal, Tone, & Technical) and 4 on the eighth, Character. The descriptor for Character states: “Development works at the edge of moral sense both at the personal and universal levels; consequences of social violation are appropriately explored; applications are made on the individual/personal level. Text on screen for Personal Level & for Particular Level.” In all of these productions, the composer’s voice should be dynamic due to the felt resonance; in other words, your voice shows that the words and images are ones that touch the core of your being and come from your own creativity, imagination, purpose, and vision.

As we move further into the second half of the Boyd text, we see how the main points (attention, intelligence, & cooperation) integrate with narrative features: character, plot, structure, dramatic irony, and theme (see pages 210-211; also note the “aims” of Part 4). Boyd especially emphasizes the four levels of explanation in Part 5 and shows how our evolved fiction means simultaneously engaging on multiple levels. McCaleb might say our evolved “fiction” is about how we imagine/create our truth forward. That’s what DMP3 does and the convergence of the levels happens at the Particular Level. If you want an advance viewing of the Particular Level, you might jump ahead and read Chapter 23 (although it is most rich when developed through the preceding chapters and having read *Horton Hears a Who!*).

Elaboration of the above:

DMP1: Resonance.

Universal (archetypal): “hit/s” from stories.

Local: social connected application/s.

*Note: these two levels & their representation in words and images should resonate with passion, should be evident in voice, and should be represented in personally “owned” images (pictures of or by the individual).*

Individual: personally connected application/s.

DMP2: Amplification.

Continues applications from DMP1 and adds contrasts including “nonsense” tales and local levels outside the individual (historical, cultural, . . .).

Builds to a “complication”: good and bad; effective and ineffective; powerful & not; meaningful and not . . .

DMP3 addresses the complication that is developed in the amplification. Shows movement toward the Particular Level where the previous three levels are best engaged, both now and in a future vision, for “truth” in answering the big questions of peace and justice, in a specific response to the individual’s gift, opportunity, & responsibility.

The purpose of this final assignment leads the individual into an expression of the Particular Level and plays with timespacemattering as story weaves into the future and

plays back through the past. Digital media production offers a special process for compressing time and space, for stop-motion and fast-forwarding, for collaging, transitioning in spins, fades, and all sorts of magic-making.

### **The Frozen Potential related to Teaching-Stories**

The fourth of our five questions is: Why isn't the enormous potential available in teaching-stories better accessed? The first three sections have elaborated an abundance of rich material. Given the legacy of teaching-stories named and articulated by Idries Shah and given our cognitive evolution as summarized by Brian Boyd, why aren't these resources being engaged more extensively?

Let's review the tantalizing resources that are at-hand. Bryan Boyd, in his chapter "Evolution of Intelligence" states:

Childhood play and storytelling for all ages engage our attention so compulsively through our interest in event comprehension and social monitoring that over time their concentrated information patterns develop our facility for complex situational thought.

In order to assess novel or problematic situations human minds can draw not only on our individual present and our species' past, as all minds can do, but also on their individual pasts, even on particular episodes, and can consider projected futures, as they turn ideas around through a possibility space enlarged by the dimensions of the hypothetical and the counterfactual. . .

We also have a compulsion to tell and listen to stories with no relation to the here and now or even to any real past. Our compulsion for story improves our capacity to think in the evolutionarily novel, complex, and strategically invaluable way . . . storytelling helps us not to override the given, but to be less restricted by it, to cope with it more flexibly and on something more like our own terms. (pp. 49-50)

Extending from Boyd, Shah asserts that despite the considerable value available in teaching-stories, their power is frozen away because people have forgotten. According to his son, Idries Shah explained:

These stories are technical documents, they are like maps, or kind of blueprints. What I do is show people how to use the maps, because they have forgotten. You may think it's a strange way to teach – with stories – but long ago this was the way people passed on wisdom. Everyone knew how to take the wisdom from the story. They could see through the layers, in the same way you see a fish frozen in a block of ice. But the world where we are living has lost this skill, a skill they certainly once had. They hear the stories and they like them, because the stories amuse them, make them feel warm. But they can't see past the first layer, into the ice. The stories are like a lovely chessboard, we all know how to play chess and we can be drawn into a game so complicated that our faculties are drained. But imagine if the game was lost from a society for centuries and then the fine chessboard and its pieces were found. Everyone would cluster round to see them and praise them. They might never imagine that such a fine object ever had a purpose other than to entertain the eyes. The stories' inner value has been lost in the same way. At one time everyone knew how to play with them, how to decipher them. But now the

rules have been forgotten. It is for us to show people again how the game is played.<sup>23</sup>

### **The Significance of Resonance.**

In *Good Stories*, we build the capacity to go deeper than the “first layer” by first locating the personal “hit” or resonance between an individual and an archetypal image that’s available in the experience of an oral telling of a teaching-story (done in the way Gioia does). As indicated above by Shah, getting to this in a scientific age usually requires taking on a playful tone; and as made explicit in Boyd, *play* is one of the most vital attributes of advancing development.<sup>24</sup> Like *story*, it’s not just entertainment; this form of play is also serious business. And like almost any new knowing, “getting it” comes better through experience than through wordy explication.

One of my sharpest experiences came when Gioia was telling a Grimms’ story, “Hans, My Hedgehog.” The “source” text goes like this:

Once upon a time there was a peasant who had money and land enough, but as rich as he was, there was still something missing from his happiness: He had no children with his wife. Often when he went to the city with the other peasants, they would mock him and ask him why he had no children. He finally became angry, and when he returned home, he said, "I will have a child, even if it is a hedgehog."<sup>25</sup>

The potential resonance from the archetypal image available in *hedgehog* would probably have zipped right past me if Gioia had not opened up the multiple levels that can be brought forward in teaching-story as she did. Here’s my transcript from the conference tape of the first three minutes of so of the story’s opening. Gioia mediates those 80 words from Grimms into some 337 that propelled me away.

Once there was a father who was a farmer and he was very rich. And he had everything that he could have. Everything. Bt he didn’t have a son. And once on a Friday night when he went down to the village, a pub where everybody was drinking beer and he offered and gave everybody a few free beers somebody he overheard say, “Well, yeah, he’s rich and can pay for everything but he doesn’t have any children. He doesn’t have a son.” So it hurt him. This hurt him. It hurt him. And he on his way home said, “I wish I had a child. I wish I had a son. Even if it were.”

I’m sure he had seen at that very moment a beautiful hedgehog come by. Now hedgehogs live in hedges. Hedges are the places between fields, the places that are small and wonderful and wild between ordered and orderly fields that grow things for the community. But the hedges are wild and the hedgehogs are so small, these ancient prehistoric beings with their sweet soft bellies, their sweet vulnerable selves. But to protect their sweet small bellies that are soft and

<sup>23</sup> Shah, Tahir (2008). In *Arabian Nights*. London: Bantam Books. pp. 10, 15, 24, 262.

<sup>24</sup> For example, on page 92, “The more pleasure that creatures have in play in safe contexts, the more they will happily expend energy in mastering skills needed in urgent or volatile situations, in attack, defense, and social competition and cooperation.” Play is also noted as a vital dimension of the paradigm shift some of us associate with Web 2.0 and digital media; see Jenkins, *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture*.

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/grimm108.html>.

beautiful with their old ancient flaps where their babies go in to hide, these old bellies, they when they are in trouble, because they are only this little, when they are in trouble they roll up in a perfect ball and all you see are little prickles because they are on their backs. There are these little prickles. So the prickles stand up and the ball protects the vulnerable interior. It protects their lives.

So he saw one, by chance.

But you know how that is--this "by chance" business. Sometimes it's fortuitous and sometimes not and if we survive it, it can be wonderful because you can learn from the parts even when they're not fortuitous. So they're always an opportunity if you survive them.

And this fellow said, "I wish I had a son even if it's a hedgehog."

As I remember my experience when Gioia was telling this at the 1995 GMC, I was thrown out of the room, not physically but psychically, into a void where I realized that the hedgehog's life-space was exactly the bridging image I desperately needed to bring meaning into my life-space. I was trying to hold together a chasm between the civilized and the wild, that zone at the edge of consciousness where the riptide threatens if one isn't warned. I don't remember returning to the story in that hour with Gioia because I was absorbing the relief that there was a generative image that helped articulate the previously bottomless crevice, that provided a bridge across or a ladder out, a hedge and a story that went along with it, to allow a holding-together, and eventually to create a revitalized timespacemattering.

In *Good Stories*, from day 1 we ask the students to learn to listen on multiple tracks and we give weekly assignments to scaffold their ability to do so. The assignment given on the first day, after being given a story experience is: Journal 1

1. Tell the place in the story that most resonated with you. For example, "I got a vivid image of when (x) did (y) at the (z)." Or "When I try to remember the story, the place that stands out most is . . ." Write only 1-3 sentences.
2. Make a visual representation of what you name in #1. You may use paper and marker (pencil, pen, colored marker, etc.) or computer drawing.

One respondent said:

When I remember the story, the scene that resonates with me the most is when Ivan cuts off the head of his tutor. Ivan's action signified a break from authority that was driven by emotion—something that is not easy to do. Sometimes the teaching of elders must be disregarded when it comes to personal feelings such as love. Such a lesson is very applicable to young adults like us.

While Shah does not label the development as *resonance*, this scaffolding seems consistent with his direction:

There is another problem which has to be appreciated when dealing with stories. Unlike scientific formulae, they have a whole series of developmental effects. In accordance with the degree of preparation of an individual and a group, so will the successive "layers" of the story become apparent. Outside of a proper school where the method and content of stories is understood, there is almost no chance of an arbitrary study of stories yielding much.

But we have to go back to an even earlier stage in order to ground ourselves, prepare ourselves, for the value of the story. This is the stage at which we can familiarise ourselves with the story and regard it as a consistent and productive parallel or allegory of certain states of mind. Its symbols are the characters in the story. The way in which they move conveys to the mind the way in which the human mind can work. In grasping this in terms of men and women, animals and places, movement and manipulation of a tale, we can put ourselves into a relationship with the higher faculties possible to the mind, by working on a lower level, the level of visualisation.

In modern man's folklore, he believes that certain contentions must be absurd, and holds on to other assumptions, without being aware that he is doing so. He is motivated, in fact, by almost completely hidden prejudices.

To illustrate the working of such preconceptions, it is often necessary to provide a "shock" stimulus.<sup>26</sup>

### **Dealing with Nonsense.**

While archetypal images can be found, translating them into explanatory language often seems frustrating. After all, the archetypes to which the images are linked are "irrepresentable"<sup>27</sup> and thus beyond our comprehension, and yet our task in penetrating the levels is to do our best even when we sense we're not getting it. Lacking words to represent the experience sometimes results in the label of "nonsense" or, perhaps at best, "I don't know."<sup>28</sup> Idries Shah points out that while children can deal with this playfully, adults often get stuck.<sup>29</sup> As just quoted above, he says that "it is often necessary to provide a 'shock' stimulus" to get past this stuck place. Calling it "nonsense" sticks the frustration back in the dark, pushed back toward the unconscious.

Resonance, sometimes found in the shock-place in a tale, can signal escape from nonsense and the advent of significant knowing. The sample of student's response given above also illustrates how the capacity to detect resonance may build from the more dramatic event in the tale (e.g., chopping off the head, jumping into boiling water). Such shockers potentially throw us into another level. When a person begins to work on multiple levels, the nonsense can yield treasures of insight.

Again, this frustration-nonsense-shock dynamic comes through far too dull in a dry explication, but it picks up steam in story. My most powerful experience with nonsense was introduced at the onset in the databilities. Here it is again: Datable #3. At age 6, way before seatbelts, I fell out of a moving car when the door had sprung open, and I lay unconscious for three days. According to what Mom told me years later, the doctors said there was nothing they could do. She'd then told me a story about

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.idriesshah.info/Shah/ShahTeaStor.htm> .

<sup>27</sup> C.G. Jung, *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, in *Collected Works*, Vol. 8, page 213-214, paragraph 417.

<sup>28</sup> I've blogged on this "I don't know": <http://dochorsetales.blogspot.com/2012/10/leapfrogging-past-i-dunno.html> . Thor and I continue to explore how engagement in digital media production bridges into "mattering."

<sup>29</sup> For example, see videos of Shah's series Dreamwalkers on BBC in 1970: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LSCBETY50MA&list=PLB30185B69DFABA1D&index=1&feature=plpp\\_video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LSCBETY50MA&list=PLB30185B69DFABA1D&index=1&feature=plpp_video) . He says, "but adults lose the honesty and vitality of children and often settle into lives [or lies] full of contractions."

Epaminondas, and soon enough I woke up. Some call it a “nonsense tale,” but it plays out over and over in my life with continuing revelations about living story and “horse sense.”

Epaminondas has evolved many times in the ways it’s played out in my life. Perhaps most importantly, I now see threads of its interlacing with gnosis. It reminds me of the Sufi tale from Rumi about the horseman who seems mercilessly to drive a just-awakened dreamer, whipping him relentlessly, making him run, until sick to his stomach, the driven man throws up all the contents, and is dazed to see amid them a terrible serpent. The horseman then explains, “I saw what entered you while sleeping. If I had even hinted of the snake, fear would have lifted the breath of life right out of your soul!”<sup>30</sup>

The story of Epaminondas carries a series of seemingly foolish events, probably adapted from a Lazy Jack tale recorded both in Appalachia and earlier in England. The version published by Sarah Cone Bryant, originally around 1900, added a refrain “You don’t have the sense you were born with” and a puppy held under water. The puppy episode provides the shock factor, apparently so shocking that the impact was edited out in subsequent editions.

The Epaminondas tale demands consideration of the compelling questions: What sense is a person born with? Does it really get lost? Can it be found again? What good would it be? What wrong might it right? Given the return-to-life context in which the story came to me, I’ve felt driven to continue questioning what appears as nonsense which has included a compulsion to work at the edge of consciousness, a magnetic attraction to story as more than entertainment, and perhaps even a subtle drive toward horse sense which at some point meant actually getting on a horse. But this moves into the final question and the topic of “mattering.”

The story pretty much disappeared from our family for a number of years after the hospital event.<sup>31</sup> It returned with the arrival of grandchildren, and I audio-recorded Mom telling it to my daughter. Then, given the consequences of Datable #1 involving my becoming identified as a storyteller, I have been drawn into considerable play in the dynamic that Gioia names of dancing between my truth and the “source.” My current wonderings delve into the connections of born sense with “horse sense,” with “felt sense,”<sup>32</sup> and with *gnosis*.

At the heart of this, runs the refrain from Epaminondas, in the vernacular, “you ain’t got the sense you was born with.” This seems to echo Idries Shah’s concern for non-accessed or frozen teaching-stories. The consequences of the loss of “born-with” sense are perhaps sometimes laughable and other times tragic. The Epaminondas tale, as printed in 1907, explicitly included a death which was later, even without Disney’s

<sup>30</sup> See <http://www.dar-al-masnavi.org/n-II-1878.html>.

<sup>31</sup> In January 1999, Mom wrote in a card to me: “I really believe when you were unconscious you heard and even remembered later about Epaminondas. You are the only child that remembers about this story.”

<sup>32</sup> “Felt sense” connects with the work of Eugene Gendlin and Sondra Perl. For example, “Gendlin observed clients, writers, and people in ordinary life (“Focusers”) turning their attention to this not-yet-articulated knowing. As a felt sense formed, there would be long pauses together with sounds like ‘uh...’ Once the person had accurately identified this felt sense, new words would come, and new insights into the situation. There would be a sense of felt movement (a “felt shift”), and the person would begin to be able to move beyond the “stuck” place, having fresh insights, and also sometimes indications of steps to take.” <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Focusing>. See also, <http://www.focusing.org/perlprocess.html>



revisionist hand, cleaned up to be suitably funny enough for children.<sup>33</sup> Perhaps the loss of this kind of knowing has been laughed away so that hegemonic policies and practices, including the dominant paradigm of contemporary scholarship, are perpetuated without awareness of the tragic losses.

I see the Epaminondas tale not only as a source of laughter but also as a cautionary tale about how easy it is to lose a very special kind of knowing and the hard consequence of this loss. Telling Epaminondas with tragic overtones is necessitated, in my opinion, because we exist in a postmodern condition that is heavily armed against a person realizing that the hegemonic construction of what counts for knowledge is tragically flawed. If a person becomes suspicious (that is, conscious and conscientious) of what gets labeled (even by the carrier of the story!) as “nonsense” or as “just entertainment,” then he or she may be ready to consider the cost necessary to recover the sense we were born with.

### **Mattering**

The final question asks: How might “mattering” contribute so that more persons reach into the potential that’s available in teaching-stories and from human evolution? Making the bridge between physical experience and symbolic experience seems connected with the apparently eternal split of body and spirit. How do we rightly separate them; how are they (re)united? What matters most?

Boje elaborates on this in *QS*, including considerable attention to the work of Karen Barad and the loss when representation dominates the actual experience. Thor summarizes and adds background on this topic:

Carr (1986) describes our experience of presence, or the present, through the intentional horizon of our temporal experience. Heidegger (1962) reveals that because of time’s ceaseless expanse into the future, it causes us to experience this present being-there as falling. Heidegger illuminates this falling as a falling-toward our death, or non-being. We experience this present falling toward nothingness, then, as anxiety. Anxiety as an ontic mode of existence brings about the feeling of incoherence. In order to build coherence in our lives, then, we must be attuned to our being present, or what Heidegger

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<sup>33</sup> I’d rather not spoil a story by non-narratively sketching the plot line. If you want to know a story, you have to experience it and I can’t give you the Epaminondas tale here in this print medium. But, if you don’t know it and need more of the story in order to follow along, I’ll compromise. When I tell this story most days, I don’t say what exactly happened to the puppy when Epaminondas follows his “sense” which involves a literal application of instruction he has just received (much the way our culture preaches and teaches). Per previous instruction, Epaminondas “cools it in the water,” failing to apply the born-with sense that puppy differs in an important way from butter. I pause the telling while Epaminondas is cooling the puppy until my listeners’ eyes get very big, sometimes moist, and most complain after the story about why the puppy had to die! Sarah Cone Bryant’s earliest version in 1907 has the mother pronounce that the puppy is dead. However, the story gets adapted within the next four years so that the exact fate of the puppy is not told (*The Riverside Reader: Second Reader*, Ed. by James Van Sickle and Wilhelmina Seegmiller, 1911). A 1927 version (Wallace Wadsworth, Ed., *The Real Story Book*. Rand McNally) also leaves the outcome unclear but gives a warning: “If you cool a puppy dog in the spring, you drown it” (p. 122). By at least 1938 when Riverside Press printed “Epaminondas and his Auntie” as a separate book, the puppy was now pronounced as “almost dead.” Eve Merriam’s version, as well as others since 1938, have had the puppy only “whimpering and shaking,” definitely not dead. I suspect that the story Bryant heard from her friend (who Bryant said had heard it from her “mammy,” in Preface of *Stories to Tell to Children*, 1907) must have had a dead puppy in it, implied if not explicit. The consequence of losing born sense is serious.

calls being-there. This attunement to our being-there in our present moment of time is our mood. Our mood affects our interpretation of our-being-in-the-world, and when our mood changes so does our interpretation of being-in-the-world. This, in turn, affects our intention toward care. Carr counters Heidegger's interpretation of our intentional experience as one of falling-toward-nothingness. The anxiety and incoherence this experience entails is not the natural state of falling intentionally through time, but one that occurs when our lived-stories begin to unravel and we lose the sense of who we are. For Carr, our existential falling through the intentional horizon of time is one of falling through the coherence of our lived-story. I use Carr's rewriting of Heidegger's present experience of care as falling as a coherent falling when we experience the present of our lived experience.

A diminished vitality, caring, or intention might be evidenced when human qualities turn mechanical. A favorite tale of ours in *Good Stories* elaborates that image. It's a story mentioned earlier that Shah calls "The Magic Horse." We title our version "The Mechanical Horse" and draw also on Burton's "Ebony Horse" that's appended to his collection of *The Arabian Nights*. In all versions, the story's about a special invention that takes a person to the heart's desire immediately, as if time and space and the constraints of our normal physical bodies don't matter. Of course, troubles ensue; perhaps the story suggests that if we live too much in symbolic space, something's lost. And that something has to do with, again, sense and nonsense. Shah's version is the shortest and it goes like this:

"The Magic Horse"<sup>34</sup>

A king had two sons. The first helped the people by working for them in a manner they understood. The second was called "Lazy" because he was a dreamer, as far as anyone could see.

The first son gained great honours in his land. The second obtained from a humble carpenter a wooden horse and sat astride it. But the horse was a magical one. It carried the rider, if he was sincere, to his heart's desire.

Seeking his heart's desire, the young prince disappeared one day on the horse. He was absent a long time. After many adventures he returned with a beautiful princess from the Country of Light, and his father was overjoyed at his safe return and listened to the story of the magic horse.

The horse was made available to anyone who wanted it in that country. But many people preferred the obvious benefits which the actions of the first prince provided for them because to them the horse always looked like a plaything. They did not get beyond the outer appearance of the horse, which was not impressive - just like a plaything.

When the old king died, the "prince who liked to play with toys" became, by his wish, the king. But people in general despised him. They much preferred the excitement and interest of the discoveries and activities of the practical prince.

Unless we listen to the "lazy" prince, whether he has a princess from the Country of Light with him or not, we shall not get beyond the outer appearance of the horse. Even if we like the horse, it is not its outward shape which can help us travel to our destination.

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<sup>34</sup> Idries Shah, *Way of the Sufi*, p. 217.

Idries Shaw references and tells this story in a number of places, including an illustrated children's book, and with considerable variation. In his notes about how some stories have been so changed that they've lost the potential to be a teaching story, he likely included what happened to the "Magic Horse" when it was included as "The Ebony Horse" in Burton's version.<sup>35</sup>

In revising the title and parts of the text from Burton's version to "The Mechanical Horse," I want to emphasize the effect on a culture enveloped in a paradigmatic hegemony about what constitutes knowing and research. I also want to stress the tendency toward immediate gratification. The tendency to rush at thought speed sometimes leaves the body behind. Problems around doing this connect with the concerns of Karen Barad as well as with a need to pay more attention to emotion.<sup>36</sup> Body-knowing also connects with the suffering side of passion and is thus easy to avoid. It just seems we're going to get in trouble when we rush too fast to engage in and to absorb mattering.

Each individual has to search out the distinctive way that's right for him or her to matter, to make sense out of nonsense. For me, horse sense plays big. This still involves discourse across the four levels of explanation, it goes into antenarrative and "non-fiction," but mattering especially demands a commitment to physical engagement. Over and over, I'm awed by the meaning and joy that comes through dedicated and exacting activity with horses, mostly in the discipline of dressage. This equestrian experience makes contact with horse sense, but it doesn't happen automatically.

In my library of a hundred or so horse books, only a handful elaborate horse sense in any more than an oblique manner. One of these exceptional books is *Horse Sense and the Human Heart* by the McCormicks who further explore the theme in their subsequent book, *Horses and the Mystical Path*, as well in the Institute for Conscious Awareness programs at their Hacienda Tres Aquilas.<sup>37</sup> As indicated in their titles, the McCormicks connect horse sense with human consciousness as well as with gnosis (considered as "self-knowledge" in the introduction to the 1997 book, p. xxx). They explore ways that working with horses advances consciousness and spiritual development. Numerous stories of how this has happened are carefully narrated. As part of mattering, I not only read and reviewed their books. I also spent a week with the Deborah and Adele McCormick riding their horses and talking about the experiences.

With a book on the topic in pre-publication form, Grace Ann Rosile reconstructs the meaning of common sense through her insightful work relating management theory with her equine experiences.<sup>38</sup> She says that horse sense "is common sense without most of the convoluted distortions and rationalizations to which our human minds seem so susceptible. . . horse sense can be used to deconstruct common sense, freeing us to imagine alternatives." Rosile implores us to imagine and construct alternatives because too often what gets acted out in our engagements with both horses and with humans is

<sup>35</sup> Burton, *The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night*, 1885-1888. "The Ebony Horse" begins in Night 357 and continues into Night 371.

<sup>36</sup> Consider Damasio's work also.

<sup>37</sup> <http://therapyhorsesandhealing.com> . [http://www.amazon.com/Horses-Mystical-Path-Celtic-Expanding/dp/1577314506/ref=sr\\_1\\_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1353955231&sr=1-2](http://www.amazon.com/Horses-Mystical-Path-Celtic-Expanding/dp/1577314506/ref=sr_1_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1353955231&sr=1-2)

<sup>38</sup> See <http://www.horsesenseatwork.com/> .

devolution of “common sense” involving “violent and cruel behavior, born of fear, creating and perpetuating a vicious cycle of ongoing fear and violence.”

Like Rosile, I am very concerned about fear and violence, including semi- to unconscious enactments. Recently, I saw a well-meaning teacher dressing down a middle-school student in a way that while it did not involve physical abuse and arguably was not even verbal abuse, I saw in it the equivalent of what horse trainers routinely employed (and, sadly, still) practice all too often in the name of “breaking the horse” (which includes breaking the spirit) “because it’s what you gotta do.” Both through my experience of successfully relating to the horse with extreme care not to damage the spirit and from reading about “the revolution in horsemanship,”<sup>39</sup> I have been enabled to see this kind of “disciplinary act” as unnecessary harsh.

What we have available in equestrian activity is the fast track to a reform of unconscious abuse. This is perhaps the deepest meaning of “horse sense.” What is more foolish than any nonsense tale is that leadership training of educators, management, politicians, spiritual guides, and others does not engage horses to absorb the revolution in consciousness. Engaging horse sense offers to revolutionize education away from classroom management and accountability, peace-making away from conflict management, social justice away from criminal justice, and human relations away from behaviorism.<sup>40</sup> All of these terms may be employed in positive senses but each has a tendency to be controlling unless “mattering” is brought to play.

Unfortunately, not every experience with a horse (or in any other kind of mattering) promises to alter consciousness. Any path to significant insight is daunting, but a door has opened. Or as Rumi puts it: “The breeze at dawn has secrets to tell you.” Experience usually wants articulation if it is to become informed. It easily escapes like a vapor vanishes, unreflected. When matter comes in a moving experience with a horse, careful reflection transforms the raw experience on into mattering. Here’s an example of a reflected engagement between me and my equestrian partner, Legacy (Leg’cy for short) that really matters.

### **A Reflected Equestrian Experience: Getting the Secret Legacy.**

Once, about four years ago, time turned surreal when Leg’cy reared--we smashed against the side of the arena and returned to the ground almost as if nothing had happened. She’d never done anything like that before.

She then stood quietly, patiently, while I, still mounted, made an inner and outer scan. Remarkably, we seemed unharmed. My left knee must have been pressed between her body and the wall. It would be sore the next day. The right stirrup and leather lay on the ground. Something big had happened, yet neither of us seemed angry. Neither did I detect the acrid odor of fear. While there must’ve been some floating dust, a clarity suspended in air that crystal quality that we know in the stilled time of crisis: all is well.

Perhaps my thinking machine was stunned and some other function formed by years of dressage training took over. Although something had erupted, our balance survived and perhaps even surpassed where it had been. How strange! She’d never

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<sup>39</sup> Among those who have influenced my understanding of the revolution in horsemanship are Ray Hunt and Tom Dorrance, especially as elaborated by Robert Miller, *The Revolution in Horsemanship*.

<sup>40</sup> Consider also Max van Manen’s *The Tact of Teaching: The Meaning of Pedagogical Thoughtfulness*.

exploded like that before. We simply rode for another span of time without incident and dismounted in a good place.

For the next several days I reviewed the sequence of events prior to that incident. Although it wasn't a formal lesson, Leg'cy and I were being coached by a more advanced rider. She'd been making suggestions, trying to bring us to greater collection. Her style involved more rein contact than we were accustomed to maintaining. Legacy's flexion had improved overall and her neck was arching in that distinctive form that indicates "on the bit." But in one area of the arena, she persisted in flexing out instead of in. After many attempts to "correct" this, Leg'cy just stopped and braced. The external advice, from the advanced rider, suggested that I hold firm with the reins, continuing to ask with my legs until she yielded.

This was when time started going out of whack. Seconds stretched out, almost pulsing, refusing to move ahead. I remember a clock with a bent second hand caught on the minute hand, throbbing but unable to advance. Back in the arena, maybe it had been my heartbeat pounding counter-advice to that of our well-intentioned coach. Her "Hold steady" was up against my heart's connection with the horse: "Ease up, buddy. The secret of timing must be treasured between us, not given away."

But I betrayed my heart. I yielded to the "advanced" rider. And Leg'cy exploded. Maybe that's what was happening in the double meaning of the story. I'm thankful for the lesson. Thankful no one was hurt. Even my relationship with Leg'cy seems solid. The next time we rode, it felt like we were progressing in an advanced level. I know I was more conscious of listening in while absorbing as much feel as I could.

My intention intensified to respect "feel." If a coach drives me toward something that feels like a violation of the secret knowing, my commitment is to the secret, the "innermost consciousness,"<sup>41</sup> not to the external advice or "law." I don't want to get presumptuous about having all the answers and not needing guidance, but I must respect gnosis whenever it comes.

### **A Program for Guiding Equestrian Experience: Reins of Power.**

As just illustrated, a person when motivated enough can transform raw experience into something that matters more; but I've also been stuck for long times in horsey experiences that I couldn't get to matter much. A guide can move things along and human companionship can even enhance the equestrian event. I've designed a program I call *Reins of Power* and have enjoyed doing it with a variety of horse-human combinations. Here's a summary of one of those and a sample video made by a participant.

Participants chose from a menu with eight choices, each featuring a different horse:<sup>42</sup>

- Working with strong/independent personality.
- Dealing with cranky irritable personality.

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<sup>41</sup> Idries Shah: "Secret" often means "innermost consciousness" (*Learning How to Learn*, p. 36). "There is no secret so close as that between a rider and his horse." Robert Smith Surtees, *Mr. Sponge's Sporting Tour*, 1853, Chapter 30, "Bolting the Badger."

"To work with horses most effectively, we must eventually get beyond technique and develop a sense of what to do . . . think like a horse." McCormicks, *Horse Sense*, p. 100.

<sup>42</sup> Zeta Adkins deserves primary credit for this list of topics. See <http://www.foxcrossingfarm.com/>.

Balancing your cues for direction.  
 Sensitive leadership.  
 Building a relationship based on trust.  
 Building your own self-confidence.  
 Facing your fears.  
 Leading from behind.

In our debriefing across all the experiences, the primary focus settled on “leading from behind.” One of the participants, Matthew Smith, produced a powerful video on his experience.<sup>43</sup> Another participant summarized our activity along these lines:

We strengthened our embodied knowing of our ability to work with existing movement and to turn it toward mutual goals. This reverberated with significance due to the difficulty we find almost every day with learners and their teachers who are seething with being pushed against their will according to mandates and inauthentic assessments. Trust in authority is at low ebb, and still teachers have to embody the spirit of good authority. Our belief that we could find a way to meet this challenge was bolstered as we handled a thousand pound horse and managed to co-lead it from behind. We knew it could turn on us and trample us, but that didn’t happen. Maybe, just maybe, we can do this in the classroom.

#### **Added Value with Digital Media Production.**

In studying the hours of our *Reins of Power* event and our video recordings of it, I continue to be most drawn to the rich dialog between experience and symbolic representation. Everybody who participated glowed with the animation that comes with an embodied experience that’s begging to be told and known more deeply through a symbolic form that lets us go deeper. I think that’s why writing was invented—the record of the experience allows us time for reflection, for polishing, for appreciating and knowing. In certain ways, digital media production meshes more into the experience with the potential involving sound, photos, and video.

While I initially resisted digital media and felt it too mechanical to carry story, I’ve come to highly value the opportunity it offers to mirror experience, to talk back to it, to provoke insight, and to be fun as well as productive work. Samples of productive fun I’ve had with digital media production related to an amazing partnership with equestrian and human friends are represented in these videos:

“On Knowing” <https://vimeo.com/9528118>

“Rumi’s Doorway, Reins of Power, & DMAL” <https://vimeo.com/11728534>

As we know from teaching-stories, trying to give the moral to someone only inhibits true learning, for the secret resides within the person and the key is in his or her authentic searching. I won’t presume to give conclusions but here are a few personal matterings. When I know by “horse sense,” with resonance in my body, I’m assured that:

- Power bows to love.

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<sup>43</sup> Matthew Smith, VisionQuest DS, Leading from Behind  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\[mjSA\]kvPcs&feature=plcp](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=[mjSA]kvPcs&feature=plcp)

- Shortcuts toward ecstasy diminish the quality and chance of getting it. These Mechanical Horse shortcuts include: force instead of trust, method instead of presence, and rules instead of relationship.
- Immediate forgiveness is possible.
- Frustration transforms when judgment is released.
- Transformed frustration paves the way for significant advance in performance.
- Ask-and-release before expecting any response to be felt and simultaneously believe it will come. In a good way, this makes for unified power and ownership.

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