

“Genesis”

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Let's start at the very beginning. The very beginning according to the Hebrew scriptures Genesis 1:verses 1-5

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the abyss, while a wind from God swept over the waters. Then God said Let there be light. And there was light. And God saw that the light was good. God separated the light from the darkness. God call the light day and the darkness he called night. And here was evening and there was morning, the first day.

What do we make of this these verses? “The earth was formless void and darkness covered the face of the abyss” the Hebrew word that is translated as formless void is *tohu va bohu*, or chaos. darkness covered the abyss. So in the beginning we have chaos and an abyss. The world was created from this watery void – the birth of a planet or maybe a universe, a moment when the wind of God swept over the waters, and everything shifted. The Hebrew word *ruach* translated wind is also breath, or spirit. The breath of God blew across the waters. Darkness was separated from light. The conditions for life as we know it were set into place.

This is a story – a metaphor, we don't need to believe that it is true for it to have power and meaning.

The word genesis, the name of the first book of the Hebrew scriptures and has come to mean the beginning or creation. These words from the book of Genesis inspired me in several ways. They made me want to consider the source of our creative energies, the breath of God blowing over the chaos.

So lets start with God. Who is this Elohim which breathes on the waters? At the time of this ancient story, the concept of God was not as anthropomorphized as it would be later on. God is a breath, a wind, a spirit, a verb instead of a noun. God is an agitator who stirs things up. These concepts can be inspiring for those of us who have felt that we had to reject the God father of our childhoods. These ideas of God are also reflected in the song that Celia and Ina shared with you Name, unnamed:

Beautiful Movement, ceaselessly forming,
growing, emerging with awesome delight,

Maker of Rainbows, glowing with color, arching in wonder,
energy flowing in darkness and light:

Nudging Discomforter, prodding and shaking,
waking our lives to creative unease,
Midwife of Changes, skillfully guiding,
drawing us out through the shock of the new,

Have you ever thought of God as a “discomforter? “, waking our lives to creative unease?”

Process theologians would say that God is a verb - a mystery that lures us to create and change. The spirit of life – the life force of the universe- is constantly moving and changing, “ceaselessly forming.”

And creation never stops, in these scriptures on the seventh day God rested but didn't mean that the life force is anything but finished. The life force strives for creativity and diversity. Children are endlessly creative. Species which do not mix up their genetic pool will become inbred and weak. Bacteria mutate to conform to the environments they live in. Humans keep writing and drawing, and building – creating and recreating. The life force is always driving towards the new. The sex drive is a part of this life energy, as is conception, and birth. Even death is a form of creative transformation.

What is the source of creativity? For many it comes unbidden, for others it comes when you stop trying too hard. In his reflection this morning Carl said – “where there is nothing, now there is something.”

Some creative moments are famous - The exclamation 'Eureka!' is famously attributed to the ancient Greek scholar Archimedes. He reportedly proclaimed "Eureka!" when he stepped into a bath and noticed that the water level rose—he suddenly understood that the volume of water displaced must be equal to the volume of the part of his body he had submerged. This gave him a solution to the problem of how to measure the volume of irregular objects. Newton famously developed the idea of gravity when he watched an apple fall to the ground from the tree.

For Mozart, one of the most creative and prolific musicians in history, music simply came into his head fully formed, when he found himself alone and in good cheer. He said, “All this fires my soul and provided I am not disturbed, my subject enlarges itself and becomes methodized and defined, and the whole, stands complete in my mind” He would hear all the parts of the

symphony at once, - “in a pleasing lively dream.” Then when he was ready to write it down he would simply take it out of what he called “the bag of his memory” and could transcribe while eating and even talking. For those of us who labor for our creative output, this seems quite magical. However Mozart’s muse was famous for being capricious. He wrote the overture for one of his operas the morning of the premiere.

For others creativity is not so easy, or living with intense creativity can take a toll. For Robin Williams, it seems that the volcano of his creativity could not be comfortably contained in his psyche.

Consciously creative people will tell you that they don’t create things by a process of purely conscious calculation. Sometimes the inspiration comes to us when we let down our rational efforts,- Bertrand Russell, the British philosopher said he would experience a “ fruitless effort to expend his creative work to completion by sheer force of will before he discovered the necessity of waiting for it to find its own subconscious development.”

What does the creative process feel like? Some have described it as a vague confused excitement, a yearning, a hunch, or an intimation of approaching or pending resolution. In all cases, before discovery there is a time of unknowing – undifferentiated like the abyss before the breath of God swept over the waters, a condition of complete indecision – something nameless and featureless. A void or even chaos.

Many of us are uncomfortable with the creative process - It is very normal to have resistance. To open up our creative energies we have to get out of the box out of our comfort zone. The box, our conscious rational mind, contains everything we know, organized in a way we are comfortable and familiar with. While the unconscious, the subconscious, the womb of creativity, is dark and mysterious, like the waters of the genesis. To dip into those waters can be challenging. Sometimes we can experience these waters as depression or anxiety, - often a normal part of the process. Sometime we must go into the abyss before we can find inspiration.

And our culture does not encourage creativity – especially if we measure by what we teach our children. Teaching math and English for purpose of passing a test is not going to inspire creativity – indeed it will squelch any that is present. With our attitude of scarcity and focus on science, the arts and music are the first to be cut.

Some of the squelching of creativity came in the 19th and 20th centuries as scientific rationalism advanced. The Scientific method of deduction breaks big questions down into a certain size box

and anything that goes into that box must be able to be observed and measured. Otherwise it is not proven or even recognized. Ironically, many significant scientific discoveries are made by accident – finding one thing when you are looking for another.

Through this focus on external measurements, our culture not only encourages people to wall off their creative impulses, and we are taught that our own intuition is not to be trusted. When you think of it, It is amazing that vital and creative change has gone on in spite of all opposition and indifference to encouraging creativity.

But creativity is needed now more than ever in our world.

Today there is widespread deep and rapid change taking place in the very structure of our lives. Many people are uncomfortable with changes and there is much fear and resistance. People are turning to fundamentalism or militarism to make sense of their lives. People are using their creative energies to spin paranoia rather than build community or find solutions.

Because of the complexity of our problems we need creativity more than ever. I believe that only our creativity will save us as a species.

We must break the hold that the old order has over us. We must create new ways of living and new ways of relating to each other.

Fortunately new ways of thinking are emerging. In science, particularly physics math, and ecology, there is less emphasis on deductive reasoning, and more attention to bio systems and chaos theory. In these new non-linear ways of viewing the world, scientists are finding patterns of flow and creation that are replicated in our bodies and in the universe. Neuroscientists who trying to deduce the brain in isolated bits, are learning that there is so much interaction between the parts of the brain, they must view the entire system as a whole. Geneticists who are trying to map the human genome, are learning that our DNA is constantly responding to the environment, creating and recreating our genetic maps as needed. Creation is ongoing.

And we must be a part of this creation. Each of us is a player in this great ongoing genesis. As I have said to you before, each individual action and interaction between us we are co-creating the world.

It is reassuring to me that there is a new focus on spirituality – people are finding the need for something more, something greater than themselves. There is a desire to get out of our rational minds and open to other ways of knowing listening to our inner voice, listening for the breath of god agitating the waters.

Creativity is spiritual practice. In the curriculum the Artists Way one of the basic requirements of the course is that you have what the author calls an artist's date with yourself each week - essentially for two hours of fun scheduled into your calendar. You and your inner artist get to decide what the fun is -singing, or drawing, bowling, or hiking in nature. Coloring with your grandkids, coloring without your grandkids. What a simple and engaging way to open your spirit and participate in creation.

It is the responsibility of each of us to participate in creation, and the responsibility of our institutions to foster the creative spirit.

Unitarian Universalism is a liberal religion – revelation is not sealed, we can create new ways of understanding and relating. It is the hallmark of our UU that we define ourselves by our growth and creative response to the needs of the world.

Genesis - The spirit moves – the breath of God is trying to agitate us to new ways of thinking and being, reaching into our own watery depths to find the creative source. May we be challenged and inspired. May we be open to the creative process, to the flow of the life force.

We sing - Spirit of Life

come unto me

Blow in the wind, rise in the sea, move in the hand.

May you be open to the presence of this great energy of creation. May it call you, agitate you to be a creator yourself.

So may it be