

# CobaltSaffron

A FREE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

## On the rocks

*“Over the last 6 months of reading the various issues of CobaltSaffron, I keep coming around to various ways that curiosity, imagination, and creativity are intertwined. For example, to be curious takes at least some bit of imagination to conceive even of the potential for something beyond what we already expect. One question that I’m trying to play with revolves around the difference between ‘rearranging our prejudices’ and what I think of as ‘real’ creation.”*

You’ve brought together nicely the three key elements of the fundamental process of creation. As you have suggested, curiosity, imagination and creativity are intertwined so closely that one could view their relationship as a trinity of connected segments making a single circle. We need all three to be in place for any one to actually function, for the circle to become a wheel that rolls beyond just “rearranging our prejudices.”

I’ve often used the simple paradigm Perception/Choice/Action as a way to describe the essential linear process to the realization of anything, from cooking a meal, to resolving complex problems, to creating art. Basically, this involves perceiving variables accurately, then choosing resourceful options, and following through with active application. This design is primarily fueled by the attributes you’ve listed, being that curiosity causes perception, imagination offers choice, and creativity is the resulting act that brings about completion.

As you have pointed out, one does need to have at least some initial imagination—perhaps the better word here is *inspiration*—to sense some value in discovery in the first place. It does take at least a tickle of spiritual muse to even locate the sensation of passionate curiosity. The opposition to such an impulse and its expression is what we’ve recently isolated: arrogance, ignorance, self-righteous entitlement, cynicism, skepticism and distrust. There’s more, obviously, but these already make for a decent list of life-long enemies, all fighting under the banner of Fear and Control.

Without any effort, no matter who we are or where we live, we’ll find each of these enemies waiting for us somewhere today. What they’ll be hunting for will be their counterparts in us. In other words, the core challenge will always be recognizing and transcending these enemies within. Consequently, to get the wheel of *curiously imaginative creativity* rolling (which I’ll try to do myself here by getting to my point), we’ll need some courage. One may like the idea of being imaginative and creative, but it’s another thing entirely to actually invest in these at the sacrifice of lesser things, such as our own prejudices and addictions. Finding a passage past the borders of our fear and control will

require a humble bravery that is itself the delineation of spiritual maturity.

I'm reminded of an exercise I was taught in my early training. As a means to ignite imaginative choice making, there was an exercise in which we had to literally jump in the air without determining first where to land (we used to do this in the evenings on rocks and boulders along the ocean shore, accelerating pace without pause for an hour or more). After falling a number of times and getting sufficiently banged up, I tried to go slower so as to control my movements, but that only made things worse. Frustrated and out of ideas, I finally stopped, sat down and tried to reassess the situation. My teacher shouted out to me while laughing, "What are you so afraid of?" Once I found a way past my anger and self-righteousness, it still took me months to understand that my fear wasn't about confronting the rocks. The fear was about admitting that I was too arrogant, cynical and unimaginative to learn to adapt to the actualities of the circumstance I was in.

Eventually, I began to find momentary pockets of relief in just acknowledging the fact that I didn't know what the hell I was doing. From there, I accessed the beginnings of humor and humility, and it became easier to forget myself. I saw details and options I hadn't noticed before. Time seemed to change, causing Perception/Choice/Action to compress into a single gesture. I had no control of the situation, but that in itself became curiously freeing. I slowly began to realize, to understand from accumulating experience, that it was more fun to learn. Discovering something beyond my expectations, even with the associated risks and probability of ongoing failure, was simply more compelling than my fear or desire for control.

This remains one of the better personal metaphors of my life, one that I'm still learning from. Admittedly, it's often tough to locate this kind of inspired humble bravery after falling and being banged up by more serious rocks and boulders over the course of a lifetime. But the dynamic and the specific challenge remain exactly the same.

By the way, speaking of creative discovery and humble bravery... Some years later I was out for a walk with the teacher who had asked me, "What are you so afraid of?" At that time, the man must have been in his seventies. During the walk, a large Doberman pinscher came out of nowhere, running directly at us while barking loudly and growling. The teacher turned and walked straight toward the dog, giggling and talking to him like one would speak to a puppy or a baby. The dog stopped right in front of us, but continued to growl and bare his teeth. Without hesitation, my teacher knelt down so that his face was just in front of the dog, petted him and whispered, "Did we scare you? Come on, let's go play." The Doberman crouched down, timidly licked the man's face and hands, then stood up and happily followed us for the rest of the walk.

Now that I think of it, that might be a good phrase to recite to myself the next time I'm confronted with my own arrogance, ignorance, self-righteous entitlement, cynicism, skepticism and distrust. "Did we scare you? Come on, let's go play."

Darrell Calkins  
June 2006

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## Comments

Thank you for your comments about the previous issue of CobaltSaffron. Excerpts from a few responses we received:

“I truly enjoyed ‘A More Compelling Game.’ Refreshing to step outside the personal arena into a concrete examination of the sinkholes that lurk beyond our individual borders—to experience this transposition of some of your fundamental principles onto a larger organizational/societal level. How does anyone actually accomplish meaningful change in this world? Your commentary manages to be, not surprisingly, at once disheartening and inspiring: it shines a sudden brilliant light on why large-scale evolution remains so dauntingly elusive, yet points the way toward the tools that do exist. I truly believe that real progress does occur from time to time; unfortunately, it always seems to be born in blood and flame. While this element of compulsion is inevitable, in the long run there has to be a better way—something more willing, something more open-hearted, something more life-affirming. ‘A More Compelling Game’ should be required reading for any progressive-minded organization.”

K.K., *California*.

“... ‘a more authentic process toward balance and harmony’. A question immediately comes to mind: Is not the authentic process itself balance and harmony? Balance and harmony doesn't mean being passive or nice; one has to find that also on a raft in the middle of the ocean in a storm. I see how this is all applicable in my life, right now. What makes how you've done this so beautiful is that it's so precise and simple in its execution that one can't help but go look for just that in one's self.”

S.L., *Belgium*.

“I thought you may enjoy reading this, which was in my mailbox today...Saffron is a royal spice, the most precious and expensive in the world. 200,000 crocus flowers are needed to obtain just one pound of saffron. In India, the color produced by soaking saffron filaments in water was considered the very perfection of beauty. Saffron is also the prime Ayurvedic spice, balancing for all constitutions and considered pure Sattva, one of the three forces of nature expressing spirituality and equilibrium.”

B.F., *California*.

“...I was moved and left with a sense of hope while reading your last newsletter. I feel a profound despair when I look around me. What a real mess in contrast with the natural beauty, balance and harmony of nature. But I'm part of this mess until I do something about my own pollution (verbal/actions...). I haven't been able to consistently live up to the level of qualities and virtues that I believe in. But I believe in the transformation of those who witness the presence of inner strength—those who are consistently and with great urgency holding their vision of what we as humans can achieve when truly in tune with a profound sense of sacredness and respect for the tremendous generosity of this life.”

M.R., *England*.

“I found your statement, ‘This is what makes for that invaluable third group: individuals with no particular ambition or mission other than to remain true to these principles no matter where the lines are drawn or which sides are taken,’ strangely reassuring, in spite of the fact that doing so is the greatest of challenges. Within society there's a lot of pressure to join a cause or belief system. There's so much safety in identifying with a group and its beliefs. But things are a lot more subtle—up to the individual's conscience—than most groups can tolerate. So, thank you yet again for the reminder of what real purpose is.”

S.C., *Alaska*.

**Upcoming events:**

*The Magic Moment*

June 24 & 25, Los Angeles

*Redefining Well-Being*

July 8 & 9, San Francisco

**RETREAT TO THE SOURCE**

October 1 - 8, Gascony - France

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Concept, design, editing and translation:

John Mitchell, Isabelle Calkins, Karen Strassman, Christian Demeuré-Vallée

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