

Continuum, Emotion, and Affective Freedom

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At 30 years of age, I awoke one afternoon to find myself helplessly sliding under my bed. Beaten down by an inner voice of failure spiraling me into a black void of emotion, I was defenseless. Smoking, drinking alcohol, dancing, sex, religion, keeping busy, destroying and creating relationships had all failed to keep my pain at bay. My relentless inner voice, "I have failed, I am worthless," became a siren alerting me to pay attention, as I could foresee a future filled with long hospital stays and drug experimentation, all familiar to me from living with a father who suffered from clinical depression. The terror of that hopeless vision drove me to my first psychotherapy session. I told my therapist, "My throat is jammed. When I feel it open, I begin to cry." My therapist nodded and asked, "What are you feeling?" Her question baffled me: had I not just told her what I was feeling? What more was there to know? Feeling either completely jammed or opening to a torrential rain of tears, doesn't this say it all?

At 30 years old, I had intuitively developed vague emotional knowledge by sensing my inner body. Yet, despite 15 years of living with my father's diagnosed depression, I had few words to describe my emotions and very little practice talking about feelings in any depth. Meeting with a therapist several times a week for a year provided support for me to feel safe speaking about my feelings, and yet I still found myself saying to friends and dance colleagues, "I

need to build an emotional economy,” and continuing to wonder why my therapist never inquired further into how my slouching, limp, deflated, spiraling, twisting, contracting, racing, jammed, opening-gushing-with-tears body ran me to her office in desperation, fear, and hope.

Until this time, I had gotten by emotionally thanks to dance, which I had practiced from an early age. Dancing I found a safe, creative environment for free and wild expression and by 32, I was dancing so much that I wore myself down. Eventually, all I could do in rehearsal was lie on the floor sensing my body and waiting to see if I could get up. The experiences of awakening to myself sliding under the bed and lying on the floor sensing my body revealed to me that to be an adult, I needed more than choreography to support my physical and emotional development.

The process of internal sensing that I began in the dance studio became a prelude to my discovery of Continuum, an inquiry into the human body through breath, sound, and fluid movement. Through Continuum, I began discovering soft, vibrating, juicy wet organ tissues; tingling, breathing skin; contracting, elongating, undulating, weighty bones and muscles. I found deep relief, deep nourishment, and deep rest. Each day I experienced more frequent positive feelings with fewer periods of strangling, gut-wrenching negative feeling. With the participation of gifted teachers (Emilie Conrad and Susan Harper) and peers, in compassionate group settings, I discovered support to integrate body movement discoveries with a new understanding of affective flow and my

emotional habits. I began to develop the personal emotional economy I had been missing and to thrive with a passion for exploring, discovering, and feeling alive through movement. My inner voice, once a prophet of failure and worthlessness, began to sing with appreciation for everything about me.

Through Continuum dancing with my physical body, feelings, thoughts, and beliefs, I discovered more connection to a greater sense of living, and to the biological basis of emotion, known as the affective system. The affective system, which functions at the silent level of our bodies, is at play in all our life experiences. Continuum offers ways to directly engage with our silent level organismic processes, to become more fluid, and more aware of and connected to our affective flow and affective resonance. Thus supporting more ability for creating opportunities for positive development on every level—physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually.

This chapter is written as auto-ethnography, or scholarly personal narrative. This type of writing stems from a postmodern perspective holding that as humans, we create the world and we create truth through our individual and collective experiences and storytelling. Utilizing auto-ethnography, I am encouraged by anthropologist Ruth Behar (1996) to recognize myself as a “vulnerable observer” and to discover through my writing how my research with others not only “breaks my heart,” but also opens my heart-body-mind to the lives of others. As I explore the connections between affective system theory and Continuum, my creative personal narrative will also invite your

heart-body-mind to open and, expand conventional standards of scholarship and transform institutional learning and the world.¹

To more specifically invite you to open your heart-body-mind to your own experience of this chapter, I periodically invite you to pause in your reading, to notice what is going on in the silence of your experience, to feel your breathing, to notice and feel yourself thinking, and to move inwardly or outwardly with all or part of your body. As you interrupt the movement of your eyes and cognitive processes to embody this writing, you create an opportunity for these words to breathe, move, and be more consciously known in your entire experience. You offer yourself a chance to know your responses more deeply, to respond in fresh ways, and to consider your whole experience more fully. You invite yourself to become a vulnerable observer of yourself and of me, as we bring life to this exploration of Continuum and the biology of emotion.

Pause . . . silently notice for 15–30 seconds what is going on in you.

Continuum: A Moving Inquiry into the Silent Level

Continuum is an inquiry into what conventional thought calls “the body”; it offers us the opportunity to develop cognitive awareness at the silent level of our physical body, where processes occur without words. What signifies a human body as a living process is its continuous inner movement, which is

¹ R. J. Nash, *Liberating Scholarly Writing: The Power of Personal Narrative* (New York: Teachers College Columbia University, 2004).

outwardly visible even when the body is at rest. For instance, consider how a person's chest moves in-out, up-down, back-front when she breathes. Every structure in the human body is a body of and for movement: the movement of fluids, the movement of cells and microorganisms, the movement of nutrients, the movement of organs, and the movement of muscles, neurons, and all the structures of the central nervous system. These are all processes that occur without words, and they are among the uncountable events in the universe that are *silent level* activities (Korzybski 2005, Bois 1996).

Pause . . . silently notice what "body" means to you. What is the weight or lightness of your body? How does what you notice move? In, out, up, down, toward, away, hover?

Cognitive awareness of silent level sensations allows us to be in touch with and enhance the flow of the *affective* or *affect system*. This is the part of the nervous system that forms the biological roots of emotions. Continuum explorations offer numerous ways to stimulate sensation while creating a time-space environment for more cognitive awareness of sensation. In doing so, Continuum enhances the efficiency of affective flow in a safe and supportive context, creating the possibility for us to develop fresh responses to feelings.

Continuum has many dimensions to its inquiry process. One essential part of the Continuum inquiry includes acknowledging that all life forms, along with the human form, are composed of fluid dynamics. One of the great

observer-philosopher-scientists of the 20th century, Lancelot Law Whyte (2003), saw all forms—animate and inanimate—as phases of a “morphic” process. From this perspective, the fluid dynamics of Continuum can be viewed as movements of a *formative* process—processes in transaction. In order to explore and develop cognitive awareness of fluid dynamics, our living formative process, Continuum uses breath, sound, wave movements, and micro-movements to awaken silent level activities as sensations in the human body.

Continuum explores sequences by combining breath and sound and movement. One such sequence might begin with four to seven *theta breaths*, a long quiet thhhhhh sound on an exhale. This breath slows down the exhale, increasing carbon dioxide in the bloodstream, which changes the rate of stimulation in the nervous system. Following the thetas is a set of *blurs*, a deep back-of-the-throat incremental sound. The increments of the blur sound interrupt and deconstruct the neuromuscular patterning created by language and swallowing. Interruptions from the blurs can soften tissues in the head, neck, throat, and connecting tissues, preparing them for movement. Next unfolds several minutes of very slow, undulating wave motion in a quadruped position—forearms, hands, knees, and lower legs supporting the body belly-down. The last element in the sequence is a gradual release of the body from the quadruped position, allowing the torso to revolve and spiral on the ground while the limbs explore space in spontaneous tentacle-like movements. At the end of the sequence, the explorer spends time sitting or lying in a state of open attention. In open attention, intentional breath and movement play cease,

and the explorer becomes aware of subtle sensations and movements flowing deep within their body.

Pause . . . gently let your tongue rest behind your teeth and let a slow thththththth or soft sssssssssss release on your exhale. Notice what you feel in your body.

During the sequence and in an open attention state, an individual may become aware of feelings, both optimal and not optimal. Continuum focuses on staying in touch with the silent activity of sensations and the physical expression of these feeling flows, instead of on the symbolic interpretive content of the feelings. Focusing on sensations and their flow patterns is key to gaining an awareness of the affective flow.

Affective System Theory, Consciousness, and the Moving Body

Affective system is the term used in psychology, psychiatry, and neuroscience to describe the activities in the central nervous system that operate as the biological roots for how humans develop emotions. Affect-system theories are based in evolutionary theory; they seek to understand emotions in the context of the biological necessities for survival and human development. One of the first pioneers in affective theory was an American playwright, philosopher, and psychologist named Silvan S. Tomkins, who extensively researched evolutionary developments in varied interactions and flexible biochemical processes (endocrine or glandular activity) in the human brain. Tomkins saw

these processes as stimulus patterns that were felt all over the body, telling us via internal processing that a change has occurred.² He called these general information patterns *affects*.

Tomkins' passion for developing his theory arose from his desire to understand human consciousness and what makes a human organism become a unique person. On the topic of why consciousness exists in living creatures, Tomkins wrote:

Increasing complexity of behavior in general did not necessarily require consciousness. Did nature need a mechanism like consciousness to guarantee the viability of living organisms? Certainly not for all living organisms: the plant lives but appears unconscious. We find consciousness in animals who move about in space but not in organisms rooted in the earth. Mobility is the key. Consider how much information would have been required to be built into an organism which is never twice in exactly the same place in exactly the same world, when that world contains within it complex organisms whose behavior would have had to be predicted and handled.³

Living systems with inner moving parts that also move through their spatial environment need to be receptive. They need processes capable of registering constantly changing information from their internal and external environments. This information needs to exchange through a central site for analysis and

² S. S. Tomkins, *Affect Imagery Consciousness* (New York: Springer, 2008), 135–136.

³ Tomkins, *Affect Imagery Consciousness*, pp. 7–8.

transformation into conscious form, so the living system knows what is going on and potentially what to do about it.⁴ According to Tomkins, the primary motivational system is the affect system, and the biological drives have motivational impact only when amplified by the affect system.

Tomkins's affect patterns are ignited by amplified neurological stimulation on the skin (inside and out), especially the face, or by sensory input from the environment. He later developed script theory to account for how we create repeated patterns, powered by affect, that in turn amplify the affects.

Affect-script theory offers a way to link the silent biological movement of inner feeling flows with the emotions humans create and learn through repeated experience and social conditioning.

Affects amplify stimuli (inner, outer, material, immaterial) and through this amplification stimuli become conscious. When we give attention, it is affect driven. In this sense, attention and affect can be viewed as synonymous. Affect theory offers us a way to link the silent level biology of nervous system activity and feeling flows with the emotions humans create via affective flow and learn through life experience of objects, ideas, beliefs, and social conditioning.

Pause . . . what are you conscious of in your experience now? Notice the silent level sensations going on. What happens as you offer open interest to your experience and these silent level movements of sensation?

⁴ Tomkins, *Affect Imagery Consciousness*, pp. 7–8.

There have been many technological advances in neuroscience since Tomkins began his research in the 1950s. Since the 1980s, his work has slowly influenced thinkers of all kinds involved in human development. Affective neuroscience has shown that there are multiple locations in the brain involved in affect activation. This multiple-site activation, referred to as *neural reference space*, is how information received through receptor processes is combined with other brain and body processes, analyzed, and transformed into conscious form.⁵

Like Tomkins, who emphasizes affect as a whole-body process contributing to consciousness, Antonio Damasio, professor of neuroscience, psychology, and neurology and author of *Self Comes to Mind: Constructing the Conscious Brain*,⁶ emphasizes how the body is nearly fused with the brain via the brainstem, seeing this as a core aspect of human consciousness. The brainstem governs autonomic functions (organs, glands, blood vessels), maintaining homeostasis and broadcasting messages to the rest of the body about how things are going. As these messages ripple through to the cerebral cortex, they combine with our memory and language functions, so we can think and talk back to ourselves, to see what is needed and what our options are.

This interaction is necessary for the survival of the physical organism, and as humans our survival also includes all our meaning structures—the symbolic

⁵ L. F. Barrett, "The Future of Psychology: Connecting Mind to Brain," *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, vol. 4, no. 4, pp. 326–339.
<http://www.affective-science.org/pubs/2009/barrett2009-future-psych.pdf>.

⁶ A. Damasio, *Self Comes to Mind: Constructing the Conscious Brain* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2010).

parts of our lives and our bodies. We can feel our life threatened by the loss of an institution (governmental, educational, or corporate) as much as by an earthquake. We can survive both and discover ways to thrive again. Noting that neuroscientists have not commonly emphasized the body and the role of feelings in consciousness, Damasio points to symbolic extensions of body-being when he speaks of how the mechanisms for managing life have become more complex as environments and organisms become more complex.⁷

Pause . . . pick up an object close to you. As you hold the object, notice what it means to you. As you hear these words of meaning, notice what you feel in the silent sensations and inner movements of your body. If this object disappeared suddenly, what would you feel?

Developing a Language for Silent Level Affects

In the same way we are born with affects that grow into emotion, we are born with the mechanisms to create language. As we develop, we learn to use language to benefit our well-being. Our ability to create language provides us with a way to point to the silent level activities of our being, such as affective flow. When we find words to describe and point to silent activities, it helps bring them to our awareness with more clarity and helps us continue to inquire into how silent level activities are at play in our experience.

⁷ A. Damasio, "The Evolving Minds of Humans," *NPR Science Friday*, NPR, November 12, 2010.

Donald Nathanson, psychiatrist and Tomkins researcher, sought to create a precise language to articulate the differences between affect, feeling, and emotion in *Shame & Pride: Affect, Sex, and the Birth of the Self*.⁸ In Nathanson's formulation, *affect* is strictly the biological part of emotion—a definable stimulus activates a process in the central nervous system that releases a biological pattern of events throughout the body. These patterns can last from a few hundredths of a second up to two seconds. *Feeling* is the word used to describe when the organism becomes aware of an affect. Feeling implies the presence of higher-order brain functions needed to become cognitively aware of something happening.

Emotion is therefore biology plus biography, occurring only in organisms that have brains capable of memory. Emotion is the combination of affect activated by memories, and memories activated by affect amplifying more affect. Nathanson writes, "Affect lasts but a few seconds, a feeling only long enough for us to make the flash of recognition, and emotion as long as we keep finding memories that continue to trigger the affect."⁹ Distinguishing these three terms illuminates how affect and feeling reside in the silent level realm of our experience and emotion functions through the symbolic and verbal realm of our experience with affect as motivational background.

⁸ D. L. Nathanson, *Shame and Pride: Affect, Sex, and the Birth of the Self* (Boston: W. W. Norton & Company, 1994).

⁹ Nathanson, *Shame and Pride*, p. 51.

Pause . . . notice what is flowing in your body. How fast, slow, lingering, or repetitive is this flow of feeling? Notice what words come to mind that describe these silent flows.

Affect patterns, which are felt throughout the entire body, are activated to offer the organism information about its well-being. When conditions are not optimal, the density and rate of neurological stimulation offers helpful information pointing to what the organism needs in order to improve conditions for well-being. Any object (an ice cream cone, a person, and idea) can be an activator of affect. When an object enters our awareness, the body, and especially the nervous system, creates a representation of the object's movement in various regions of the brain. The message of the representation's movement is amplified by the affect system and broadcast throughout the body, letting the organism know that this object is moving in such and such a way. This movement message combines with already established movements going on in the organism.

As these object-image-inspired movements and previously established movements combine, a special sense of value emerges. According to Tomkins, the value is punishing or rewarding (optimal or not optimal). Barrett, on the other hand, defines these values as pleasurable or unpleasurable. The difference in these value systems is subtle yet significant. Punishing or rewarding indicates the organism will have a sense that an object is harmful or satisfying. Pleasurable or unpleasurable, on the other hand, indicates the organism will have a value of something being positive or negative, which is a fundamental feeling that is hard

to define. This valuing system strays from the evolutionary theory that is the basis for affective neuroscience. In evolutionary theory, an organism is most concerned with what is harmful or beneficial for survival. What is pleasurable or unpleasurable to humans is clearly not always what satisfies or harms one's survival needs. Tomkins's point is to emphasize affect as general and able to combine with anything.

For Tomkins, *positive* and *negative* refer only to what is optimal or less optimal for the organism's sustainable well-being, not whether the person feels happy or sad, pleasure or no pleasure. We need *positive affect* to let us know all is functioning optimally for living; we need *negative affect* to let us know when adjustments need to be made to resume an optimal rate and density of movement flow. Tomkins suggests we have *positive, neutral, and negative affects*. All these aspects are essential to the overall structure and dynamics of a living being and to the well-being of an organism and human person.

Affect provides general information; cognitive processes transform the general into specific information. Tomkins sees the organism as both affective and cognitive, each functioning differently within what he calls "the minding system" of the body. One aspect functions to bring general information into awareness while the other functions to bring specific information into awareness.

Pause . . . soften your focus, cover, or close your eyes with your hands, and take a few moments to notice what you are feeling. See if you can follow the movement of feeling

wherever you become aware of feeling. Let this feeling express sound or find a word name, then notice what happens in your body.

Both affective and cognitive functions are kinds of knowing. Tomkins, in his quest to understand affect, observed infants from birth onward, developing a theory of the innate patterns of affect. He believed that even the infant without language has ways of knowing, through movement and sensing. He saw that infants and caregivers immediately begin communicating through affect via facial expression, sound, and eye contact. Through this immediate nonverbal communication and experience, with the processes of innate affect, the infant begins to develop emotional understanding. Thus, cognition and affect interact from the moment of our birth. Tomkins's view of cognition and affect co-assembles recognizes emotion as a development that is unique to each person, as their affective experience combines with their biography (including cultural influences) over time.

In an attempt to create a common language and a starting place for affect research, Tomkins distinguished nine innate affects: He chose words for the innate affects that most accurately described for him the expressions resulting from the rate and density of stimuli activating the nervous system in the organism. Tomkins suggested that we are born with nine basic affects:

Positive

- **Interest to Excitement**—An optimal increase in rate and density of stimulation
- **Enjoyment to Joy**—An optimal decrease in rate and density of stimulation

Neutral

- **Surprise to Startle**—An instant spike then drop in the rate and density of stimulation

Negative

- **Distress to Anguish**—A steady state of dense stimulation
- **Anger to Rage**—A higher steady state of very dense stimulation
- **Fear to Terror**—A speedy escalation of dense stimulation
- **Disgust**—The impulse to egest or regurgitate a toxic substance
- **Dissmell**—The impulse to back away from toxic odors
- **Shame to Humiliation**—An incomplete interruption of positive affect flow, partial deflation

Six of these nine affects are fully functioning at birth and three (dissmell, disgust, and shame-humiliation) develop immediately after birth. Disgust and dissmell (a word created by Tomkins) begin to express themselves after birth; these are the only two of the nine that do not run on a continuum from mild to intense. They are designed to interrupt the hunger drive and give the organism information about the toxicity of a digestible or digested substance. With dissmell, we back

up and away from a toxic-smelling substance to avoid intake. With disgust, we internally push up, push out, and back away from what we have ingested that turns toxic inside (gag or regurgitate).

The last affect, Shame to Humiliation, is the most recent to develop in the evolutionary progress of the brain. Shame to Humiliation is auxiliary to positive affect; it occurs when the positive flow of interest-excitement or enjoyment-joy is incompletely interrupted, causing the muscle tone of the organism to collapse with a few seconds of cognitive confusion.¹⁰

Pause . . . notice what is flowing in the silence of you now. Let your body move in a soft slow wave motion internally or externally. Pause again. What is flowing in the silence of you now?

It is essential to remember that these nine basic affects are flowing currents in the fluid dynamics of the human central nervous system. The nervous system is bathing in the only fresh water in the body—the cerebral spinal fluid.¹¹ Science and psychology show that uninhibited, efficient affective flow is essential to the vitality and well-being of the organism and the development of the human being. When affective flow is inhibited or obscured, vitality diminishes and may

¹⁰ Nathanson, *Shame and Pride*.

¹¹ B. Gintis, *Engaging the Movement of Life: Exploring Health and Embodiment through Osteopathy and Continuum* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Press, 2007).

express itself in a variety of somatic-emotional conditions, such as intractable negative moods, repetitive stress injuries, addictions, and eating disorders.

Dancing through Affect into Fluid Vitality with Continuum

Enhancing affect flow is essential to generate vitality of life. We need to maximize positive flows, minimize negative flows, and decrease the inhibitors of all affect.¹² Repetitive stimulation from the environment, thoughts, or faulty internal body systems will create distress (negative affect) in one's body. Likewise, positive or negative affect that does not fully complete expression will encourage negative feelings to linger and intensify. In Continuum, I discovered a way to bring Tomkins's positive affect of interest to all sensations through breath, sound, and movement—enhancing all my affective flow, negative and positive. Each breath, sound, or movement explored in Continuum stimulates positive or negative flow by increasing or decreasing the density of neurological stimulation. By awakening new rates and densities of neurological stimulation, Continuum elements began to interrupt my distress patterns and other inefficient affective scripts (emotional patterns). They also increased support for more full expression of both positive and negative affect. Both the interruption of repetitive stimulus and the support of full affect expression provided the conditions that allowed my positive affective flow to resume.

When exploring elements in a Continuum sequence, participants are invited to take their time feeling their way through each breath, sound, and

¹² Tomkins, *Affect Imagery Consciousness*.

movement. This allows each person to increase or decrease neurological stimulation and feeling flow at a rate that is optimal for the unique organization of their biology. Using the Continuum sequence described earlier as an example, the theta breath with its long exhale, changes one's breath rhythm in a sustained way. The blurs changes one's breath rhythm and tissue activity with short interruptions. The quadruped wave motion and tentacle wave motion each add rhythms of stimulation at intrinsic and gross-motor movement levels. All these activities, interruptions, and undulating movements encourage fresh flow and unique variations of regulation in one's nervous system.

L. L. Whyte wrote that "joy is vitality without discord,"¹³ expressing his unique insight into the nature of the dynamics of affective flow. Continuum's inquiry into the silent fluidly dynamic, nature of the human body, offers many ways to develop "vitality without discord" through interest in the silent realm and enhanced flow of the entire affect system. By exploring the elements of breath, sound, and movement in creatively supportive environments, people are invited to discover the rhythms and pulses of their own being. As participants are encouraged to grow endless value for every nuance and murmur of sensation, they re-cognize themselves again and again and again. The term *re-cognize* refers to the work of writer and psychiatrist Iain McGilchrist. McGilchrist shows how the capacity of the left and right hemispheres of the brain to collaborate with each other and with the movement of the human body gives

¹³ Whyte, L. L., *The Universe of Experience: A World View of Science and Religion* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2003), p. 80.

humans the capacity to reconfigure their cognitive perspective of previously known experiences.¹⁴ This is a different activity than pure recognition.

Thus, deep internal satisfaction manifests in silent self-recognition. Belonging increases, minimizing isolating and potentially destructive self-beliefs, while offering space to grow fresh emotional responses that resonate with new meaning from the flow of sensing and feeling. As each person's silent level needs are re-cognized within, an ocean of positive feeling gently swells, creating an environment that is abundant with positive affective resonance. At the end of a Continuum class or workshop, people often speak of feeling enlivened and vibrant with a deep sense of connection, contentment, and joy. The silent level needs of their organisms have been fully supported, allowed to flow with full affective freedom.

Pause . . . Try some or all of the Continuum sequence laid out in this chapter:

Theta breath (4–7 exhales)

Blurs (2 minutes or so)

Slow wave motion in a quadruped position (on the ground on hands and knees, or sitting in a chair with feet on the floor and hands on another chair)

Slowly releasing limbs into floating random tentacle movements

Open attention

Layer the experience by doing the sequence 3 times, with open attention in between layers.

¹⁴ McGilchrist, I., *The Master and His Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World* (Totton, Hampshire, UK: Hobbs the Printers Ltd., 2009).

Slow down, take your time, and feel your silent level experience emerging.

Conclusion: Moving into the Present Toward a Sensuously Fluid Future

During my first five years of diving into silent realms of sensation and movement through Continuum, I spent several hours each day, sometimes days at a time, alone, breathing, moving, feeling, and sensing into long-forgotten parts of my body: Starting with my belly and legs, oozing into my arms, pelvis, and chest, finally radiating throughout my brain and skull. At times, a critical inner voice taunted me, “You’re being awfully self-indulgent.” Yet with each subtle movement inwardly and outwardly expressed through organs, skin, bones, and muscles, I could feel relief and nourishment settle inside me. After months of meeting this inner critic, I eventually heard myself respond with acceptance, “Yes, I am self-indulgent. I need to indulge in relief, if I’m going to thrive. I trust these feelings of quiet relief. They are making me stronger. One day I will understand how and why, and so will you.” Each day I experienced more frequent and greater positive feeling flow with fewer periods of strangling negative feelings, and I discovered an enduring sense of sustained vitality more available to carry me through life’s challenges.

My fluid journey with Continuum and affective theory began twenty-six years ago. My quest to develop an emotional economy has grown into my life’s work. I teach myself, people in my region, around the United States, and in Europe. These people are Latino, African, African-American, Caucasian, Asian, Native North and South American, and have ranged in age from 23 to 99; they

include every gender, many spiritual beliefs, and a very wide range of physical abilities, including beginning and end-of-life journeys. Together, my inner world and outer world are fluidly moving, breathing, and feeling an abundant exchange of resources. From deep within, my interested eyes look out with wonder onto this world. The ocean of my body ripples, undulates, spirals, eddies, barrels, settles, quiets, and glistens in every direction; affective value appreciates in me and through me, moment by moment.

In almost every workshop I attended with Emilie Conrad, she said, “Movement is what we are, not something we do” (Gintis, 2007). We become bodies as we navigate our historical, philosophical, scientific, psychological, spiritual, familial, and societal oceans and landscapes. We are fluid, moving body stories, dancing with the past in the breathing moment of now, tending our hopes, dreams, and unknowns toward our moving future.

Pause . . . silently feel, the fluidly breathing-moving hopes, dreams, and unknowns of your unique being.