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Synectics: Applying its methods and techniques to the composition class

Jack Tapleshay

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SYNECTICS
APPLYING ITS METHODS AND TECHNIQUES TO THE COMPOSITION CLASS

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
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University, San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
English Composition

by
Jack Tapleshay

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ABSTRACT

In the spring of 1983, I was searching for a process to help show the need, usefulness, and potential of emphasizing creativity in the classroom. A colleague suggested I look into the term synectics. This solved my initial problem and led to the core of my research.

Synectics is a method of creative problem solving through the use of metaphor and apparent irrelevancy developed by William J. J. Gordon. The process involves rational knowledge of the problem to be solved. The focus of this paper is directed toward showing the importance of recognizing the need for creativity for students who are learning a formal writing process.

This thesis of this paper is concerned with showing why and how synectics can be used effectively in the composition classroom. The first chapter explores the roots of the creative process and how they are entwined with synectics. Chapter Two discusses the nine phases that makeup the synectic process. This chapter suggests how each of these steps relate to everyday classroom situations. Portions of these suggestions have been used by this writer in actual classroom setting with successful results. Perhaps my most encouraging discovery was that by discussing abstract one-word topics in a creative problem solving group gives each group member greater exposure to the number of perspectives that exist toward any one word. The group broke down individual fears through discussion, and its members' writing revealed well-supported, specific paragraphs.

The final chapter discusses synectics in three, separate aspects of the classroom situation: discussion, prewriting strategy, and drafting and revision. Because synectics, like writing, is an ongoing process, it can be used in a repetitive fashion with trained students in one-to-one conferencing, with small groups of students, or with the class as a whole. The synectic process can be adjusted to the teaching style of the individual instructor.
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The English philosopher John Poppy Robinson once wrote, "Creative intelligence is what makes man." This is a terrific way to define the unique makeup of man, that is, until one attempts to figure out what Robinson meant by "creative." Robinson was onto something if he meant human beings have the ability to create things. Human beings have always found original ways to cause things to exist, but discovering how this process occurs has been the subject of age-old speculation. One recent theory that addresses the creative process is called synectics.

Synectic research began and was developed in the early 1960's by the Cambridge Synectics Group in an attempt to provide industry with a means of stimulating more creative thought from its workers. The Cambridge Synectics group evolved their study of creativity in two ways: studying the problems of invention and developing ways to teach a creative process. The ongoing research in the field justifies the originators' intent as a basis "to [help] illuminate the creative process" and to develop "working hypotheses which are useful in practice and have increased markedly the creative output of both individuals and groups" (Gordon 5).

A similar viewpoint that looks at the purpose of synectics is offered by George M. Prince:

Synectics has developed two basic and interrelated approaches: first, procedures that lead to imaginative speculation; second, disciplined ways of behaving so that speculation is not cut down but valued and encouraged. ( The Practice of Creativity, 9)

The theory of synectics calls for getting all there is to get from one's creative capacity. In his book, Synectics, William J. J. Gordon maintains that the theory of synectics assumes "the creative process in human beings can be concretely described, and, further, that sound description should be usable in teaching methodology to increase the creative output of both individuals and groups." (8) With this statement in mind, it would seem possible that synectic research can be used as an operative theory in the teaching of college-level writing; the synectic
process is a means of introducing a heuristic device to those students in need of a systematic procedure to help capture, as well as convey, their thoughts on paper.

Both Gordon and George M. Prince ("Synectics" 317) suggest the creative process is primarily composed of three elements: consciousness, imagination and invention. This process is "a cornerstone for that combination of originality and expressiveness in the way a human being thinks" (Neisser 244). And the way a human being thinks is the way a human being writes. Therefore, understanding the elements within the creative process seems to be a logical link for the composition teacher interested in integrating synectic theory into a composition program.

The three major parts of the creative process must be understood as a starting point if the synectic process is at issue. As defined within this paper with regard to synectics, the creative process is "perceiving new and relevant meanings and relationships in what we know and what we intend to. It is making new connections, new metaphors" establishing the foundation for Gordon's more concrete approach to a workable system "to increase creative output" (Burns 95).

Mr. Robinson said at another time that, "Discipline and focused awareness... contribute to the act of creation." That "focused awareness" is another way of saying consciousness. Consciousness is a catholic term that leans more toward interpretation than definition; consciousness should be viewed more in terms of a capacity rather than an ability.

How many times has a Composition instructor preached Mr. Robinson's "focused awareness," to a class of freshman writers? Actually, asking students to sense the possibilities a particular topic holds and allow those possibilities to stretch their minds is a big part of teaching composition. In order to avoid the dreaded "stream of consciousness" syndrome, young writers need to receive, hold, and absorb that which is being focused upon.

"I've never had a thing go wrong on my car... except on Sundays and holidays." 71-year-old regular, every-day-guy Stanley Riggs made this unique observation about the working
status of his automobiles for a good many of those years. His ability to focus on a particular subject and state his observation is what makes the quote worth repeating here. Even in his humor, Riggs is exhibiting the kind of awareness that the student of writing "must explore — adventuring to the heights and depths of consciousness — and then report accurately and honestly what you find there" (Duncan 7). Donald Murray adds, "Most of a writer's time is spent trying to perceive his subject. His business is perception — to see and to understand so that he can make the reader see." (A Writer Teaches Writing 2) Therefore, consciousness is, in large part, that perception where a writer begins to manipulate an awareness; it's the birth of ideas that develop into specific thoughts.

For instance, if an instructor held an apple before his class and asked each student to define that apple by what he/she saw, the responses would, initially, be more indicative of memory than consciousness. However, if that same instructor made it clear that the apple could only be defined in terms of its immediate existence, then the students would be called upon to use their awareness of the visual focus each gave to the apple. These responses would involve almost a total reliance on receiving, holding, absorbing, and qualifying what the instructor held in his hand without the benefit of a common name. The apple would become the object of focus — a concrete, distinct perception of that moment.

A composition instructor should help each student develop that ability to consider "the familiar strange" (Gordon 158), to understand that a "writer gets ideas by spending part of his time in a state of open susceptibility ... he listens, he looks, he tastes, he touches. He is in contact with life in an uncritical way, accepting life..." (Murray 2). Each student has an individual capacity of consciousness, of which the unconscious, subconscious, and pre-conscious (Gordon) are all states, with "ideas and conceptions of the world directly resulting from these states" (Ouspensky 18).

So we find that consciousness is that point where creativity begins, starting a process that helps demonstrate our potential as human beings. Writers pursuing their potential must
realize the same awareness. For the student writer, a lack of awareness leaves the writing topic in limbo. To lack the ability to observe, concentrate upon and study one particular concept takes the writer's sensory mechanisms away; this void then presents the writer with the choice of allowing an emotional response as filler or to not write at all. This phenomenon helps to define terms like "writer's block" and keeps the writer from zeroing in on the main idea of any given assignment (Nuernberger 36).

**Imagination** develops the mental image of an idea; it allows the mind to define a picture of the possibilities within any idea. This next step in the creative process, in association with synectics, is an everyday occurrence that may be disciplined with exercise. If Prince is correct when he states that, "there is strong evidence that the unconscious mind is a reservoir of information so vast and rich that it challenges the imagination." ("The Operational Mechanism of Synectics" 2) then all writers should strive to develop a daily regimen of imagination calisthenics.

A synectic approach (making the familiar strange) to the teaching of writing that makes the student first conscious of the topic, then able to imagine it as something other than what its name implies, is a step closer to completing the creative process. When Osborne says, "...we seldom pick the right gift without imaginative effort," (32), or when Ouspensky states "that an investigator comes upon the attempts to express in one way or another the content of hidden knowledge he invariably sees the same thing, namely, the striking poverty of human imagination in the face of this idea." (46), instructors can appreciate the possible results that will occur by emphasizing imaginative thinking in the classroom.

An example of one way a writing instructor might try to encourage imaginative responses from students would be to introduce them to the concept of analogy, a form of logical inference based on the assumption that if two things are known to be alike in some respects, then they must be alike in other respects (Jiminez 33). The instructor can actually lead the student toward "allowing oneself to be guided by a sense of analogy, which can be formalized into three
specific kinds of analogy: direct analogy, personal analogy, and compressed conflict" (Jiminez, 35).

Direct analogy amounts to comparing two seemingly unlike things; this comparison is usually made explicit by the use of introductory words, such as like or as (i.e. simile). The advantage of using unusual, or not often compared, things in direct comparison is that the exercise itself will provoke a kind of consciousness that inspires further imaginative thought.

For instance, these questions could be presented to a group of students for no other reason than to jar them out of their familiar, daily thought patterns and into a mode of thought that requires both consciousness and imagination:

What in your kitchen is most like a clam?
What social custom functions like the atmosphere?
What in a piece of music is most like the currents of air, water and magma?
What in a car most embodies survival under extreme conditions?

(Jiminez 36)

By encouraging students to make these direct analogies, the instructor is following another instance of the the synectic principle of making the strange familiar where the attempt to answer may outweigh the profundity any answer might include. This type of questioning not only invokes imaginative responses but will help students understand the concept of personal analogy.

Personal analogy involves a subjective consciousness (Ouspensky 279) not normally found in the familiar. The student is asked to understand the concept of projecting the self into, or becoming one with, certain inanimate objects, then reflecting the experience back to an observer or reader. Thinking of oneself as an electrical socket or a fruit bowl can be difficult for a student to comprehend in as much as that student's background conceivably sells the "present self" on more practical means of thought. But personifying inanimate objects can help
guide that student through the "what" of writing (Murray 22-23); therefore, any metaphorical approach to imaginative response in the thinking processes of the contemporary student is a positive, educational step that offers a "way" to approach problem solving.

A synectic approach toward a third kind of analogy, compressed conflict, can help a student envision "something in terms of something of the other." (Jiminez 33) Compressed conflict uses a type of parody, the oxymoron, as a means of developing imaginative, and metaphorical, skill by way of the opposites involved.

Jiminez explains this concept the following way:

By looking actively for paradox, one can come close to understanding the working essence of a thing, the point at which different forces meet in tension and cause an action (36).

Synectic Education Systems of Cambridge, Mass. cites the following examples of exercises in compressed conflict (Jiminez 36):

"Healthy Poison" is a compressed conflict description of what thing?

What thing might the compressed conflict "Straight Twist" describe?

What animal could "Delicate Armor" describe?

What animal could "Swinging Stability" describe?

"Exact Disorder" could describe what?

If the result of discovery through analogy is that students must make conscious efforts to exercise their minds, who in the educational community will complain? It won't be the composition instructor who is finding new sparkle in those one-time humdrum student essays. Richard Harriman believes "leaps of imagination" beyond linear logic are necessary for all students, saying:

Though no one can dispute the importance of sound quantitative skills, we are often faced with challenges and opportunities for which analytical ability alone is not enough. In a rapidly changing world, the great breakthroughs are seldom developed
along purely lexical line. Truly new ideas involve leaps of imagination as well. ("Creativity: Moving Beyond Linear Logic" 17)

Student essays become individual inventions, the result of imagination in alliance with consciousness. Invention is the concrete part of the creative process. It takes awareness and images and makes them into something that can be appreciated by other minds. In synectic practice, it is what allows members of a group share their thoughts. For the writer it can be "everything after 'Writing' and 'Re-Writing'... essentially the imposition of pattern upon experience" (Rohman 106).

Invention, in traditional approaches to discourse, is the "rhetorical art concerned with discovering... subject matter." Writers need to compose what their minds have created, compose it again on paper making sure it is "understandable and believable to certain readers."

These ideas are further explained in the following:

Every writer confronts the task of making sense of events in the world around him or within him -- discovering ordering principles, evidence which justifies belief, information necessary for understanding... He uses a method of invention when these processes are guided deliberately by heuristic procedures, that is, explicit plans for analyzing and searching which focus attention, guide reason, stimulate memory and encourage intuition. (Young 1)

Invention, the third part of the process, is the "doing" segment; what Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget calls, in reference to education, creating "men who are capable of doing new things" (Behrens 81). Classical invention encourages the "discovery of the available means of persuasion in any rhetorical situation" (Young 18), and this most concrete part of the creative process results from a student's consciousness and imagination becoming readable prose.

Because invention leads the student to reflect the act of creation, a plethora of terms and methods have been offered as assistance in conquering this part of the creative process. One such method is Kenneth Burke's Dramatistic Method (A Grammar of Motives). In analyzing Burke's dramatistic method with regard to rhetorical invention, Richard E. Young makes the distinction
between Burke's insistence that his theory is "an extension of classical rhetoric" and what his
dramatistic method actually addresses (36). According to Young, classical invention aids in
discovering possible arguments, but Burke's theory "is an aid in discovering the essential
features of the behavior of groups of individuals."

Although Burke's "pentad of heuristic probes" (Young 36) -- act, scene, agent, agency,
and purpose -- roughly equal out to the well-worn "what, where, who, how, and why" of
writing, it offers a fictional scene that fits the ongoing phenomenal aspect of invention.
Inventors do not always invent what they initially planned on inventing. Imagine, if you will, a
world in which the five W's and the H were not yet discovered. Mr. Burke, concentrating on a
theory that will ally itself to a classical philosophy, invents his pentad that is summarily
criticized for missing the mark. Years later, a researcher searching for a method of introducing
questions to the human experience, discovers Burke's dramatistic method and, after making a
few adjustments, publishes his findings. The world, therefore, becomes rhetorically blessed
because someone found the proper, or timely, need for Burke's hard work.

The point to this example is that an invention is valuable, even if it doesn't seem
relevant at the time of its conception. That's one reason professional writer's refuse to discard
their notes; who knows when something in those notes won't come in handy. Invention just
seems to lean more toward novelty and expansion than purpose, control and convention. In fact,
the entire creative process leans the same way. Individual perception and intangible factors
(chance) play too large a role for ideas to be shackled by either specific or ambiguous
constraints.

The 19th century English philosopher John Stuart Mill once wrote about invention:

... It is in the distinct recognition that the end of education is not
to teach, but to fit the mind for learning from its own
consciousness and observation... Let the feelings of society cease
to stigmatize independent thinking. ("On Genius 649-59)
To follow up on Mr. Mills' idea, the contemporary student writer needs a process designed to get the most from one's creative self. It is important for the writing instructor interested in applying the synectic process in the classroom to understand that consciousness, imagination and invention are at the root of synectic theory. However, once that understanding is established, synectics can be used as a process that will assist the instructor in the day-to-day classroom by helping students gather ideas from one another. The results of this idea gathering will be found in students' prose that offer interesting, refreshing and entertaining approaches to assigned writing topics.
RELATING THE SYNECTIC PROCESS TO THE COMPOSITION CLASS

The beauty of synectics is that it offers a process that encourages idea sharing within a group; it offers the individual "a means for consciously penetrating hatred of change and for liberating creative potential that is now only fractionally used" (Prince 11). For the college writing class, synectics allows each student to draw information from peers that may stimulate thought in that student that might otherwise remain dormant. Synectics acts as an agent for pooling ideas.

Synectic practice presents the teaching community a well-conceived process that adds the bonus of the class helping one another with the problems that writing topics are invariably designed to bring about. The practical application of the original synectic process is best understood by its nine major phases taken from Appendix II of Synectics: The Development of Creative Capacity (158–160):

Phase 1: Problem as Given
Phase 2: Making the Strange Familiar
Phase 3: Problem as Understood
Phase 4: Operational Mechanisms
Phase 5: The Familiar Made Strange
Phase 6: Psychological States
Phase 7: States Integrated with Problem
Phase 8: Viewpoint
Phase 9: Solution or Research Target

The instructor assigns a writing topic to the student; the student must react to the problem as given. Traditionally, these "problems" are designed to allow students to share
individual perceptions of a portion of the world that they may know. Too often, the student feels obligated to leap into the problem as given for want of any other choice than to complete the given assignment. For example, if the student who has never had a job is asked to approach a problem which requires the writer to discuss work-related experiences, the result will be a melange of guesswork and conjecture. Sharing ideas with people who have work experience gives the same student an opportunity to devise an essay with an awareness of a world not previously considered.

Certain aspects of the writing process (prewriting, dissection, stage writing, etc.) are proven methods of assuring a legitimate end product. However, these methods are often left to the individual, and there is often little or no group interaction, outside of informal group discussion, to assist the writer's approach to the problem. The synectic process offers a patterned and disciplined means of deflecting the anxiety produced by the problem as given while, at the same time, producing a "team effort" when confronted with a problem.

Making the Strange Familiar encourages examination by approaching that which is peculiar to one's experience with ordinary, or familiar, assumptions. A group might early on discuss the simplicity of the problem as given. For instance, human beings use their legs to walk toward a destination. This process is most commonly achieved by walking forward. If walking backward were suggested as an equally effective means of obtaining the same goal, the group would be given a new problem to solve. Determining that walking backward achieves the same purpose as walking forward and that thinking of things as backward is just a way of revealing a reverse order of accomplishment, strange becomes familiar, and the conventionality of walking forward would require an explanation beyond habit. Therefore, familiarizing oneself with walking backward would make that process less strange by virtue of becoming aware of the possibility of doing so.

The impressions left by conventional thought are firm and are often difficult to dispel. Prince reflects on this point when he says:
Synectics is a means for consciously penetrating hatred of change and for liberating creative potential that is now only fractionally used. It can increase the probability of using all the talent you have as a leader or a group member. (The Practice of Creativity 11)

Problems taken to this phase run straight into an age-old obstacle of the writer, that is, convention as an excuse for limited thought. Synectic phases are designed to roll over convention, as Prince explains further:

Problems that have been worked and reworked require fresh approaches; otherwise, people keep seeing the same problem in much the same way and get caught in the same restrictions.

(75)

Of course, following through on the walking-backward analogy, the problem as understood would most likely address seeing where one is walking. Seeing by way of mirrors would become a new, strange concept to become accustomed to as well as the number of additional problems that would evolve from making the strange familiar. In addition, the physiological process of walking may be examined, as well as comparisons to other modes of transportation; friction and other physical properties involved; times that people walk; places they walk to; walking as it relates to various cultures and traditions... indeed, the abstract term can evolve into innumerable, and concrete, possibilities through group interaction. Khatena contends that verbal images can be a direct result of synectic practice, contending that:

Making the "strange familiar" and "the familiar strange" is how Gordon (1961) has described the process. Gordon and his associates of the synectics group consider analogy as a very potent creative thinking mechanism which they use in their brainstorming sessions... analogies with complex image patterns tend to be more interesting and provocative than simple image patterns. (116-117)

The advantages of repeating the process as many times as possible lie in understanding the process as a never ending approach to problem solving. New ideas are bound to emerge at every turn.
... the problem-solving process becomes one of opening up the self to the fullest possible awareness of the storehouse of energy and resources within oneself -- in one's vast mental library of life experience -- as well as in the vast data of the external world. Problem-solving becomes the task of finding the greatest number of interconnections and interrelationships among these vast resources, including the layer of primary information stored in our brain cells from birth and even from embryonic states. One searches for the kinds of synergistic connections that one can make toward the solution of one's problems, one's goals, one's wishes, one's aspirations, one's hopes, one's dreams -- for oneself, one's family, one's group, one's society, one's world, one's universe. (26-27)

Problem as Understood is a result of becoming aware of the problem as given and having attempted to make the strange familiar. It's the phase where one begins to imagine solutions to the problem as given. To this point, the problem as given and making the strange familiar identify with consciousness. Incorporating the problem as understood into problem solving helps to break down the fear that accumulates in a conventional world. If convention is not understood in terms of its primary trait, that being the repetition of familiar principles, invention cannot occur.

(It should be noted here that simplistic topics, such as walking (or eating, shopping for a birthday present... any day-to-day task or activity) may seem mundane or trivial to instructors used to more traditional approaches to writing topics. One might ask, "Why not just state the problem as understood and have the student writers take it from there?" Synectics is about exploring one's creative capacity. I don't suggest walking as an example because it's simple; I suggest it because I've used it in the classroom and discovered that my writers no longer accept abstract statements as paragraph support. I've used the terms freedom, passion, work, time and death as a starting point for synectic discussion as well. When my writers reach problem as understood, they realize that these abstracts do mean different, specific things to other members of the group. It may just be blind luck, but my writers consistently support the limited topics of their papers with specifics based on their viewpoints. I choose to believe that this success reveals the synectic process at work.)
Metaphors highlight the next synectic phase, called **Operational Mechanisms**. This transfer of thought is often used only in reference to fiction or poetry: "creative writing." But, as Donald McQuade points out in his article, "Metaphor, Thinking, and the Composition Process," metaphor has a place in the composition class:

> Working with metaphor in composition classes can restore creative power and freedom to our student's language. Metaphor is, after all, perhaps the most exquisite and powerful form of liberation available to any writer. To redeem the integrity of metaphor, to restore to it the power of cognition, metaphor must at once be freed from the debilitated identity of being no more than a simple decorative feature of language. It must be returned to a more productive role as one of the most inventive aspects of rhetoric -- as a frame for building meaning in writing. (*The Writer's Mind* 222)

If McQuade is correct, it would seem feasible to integrate all metaphorical devices into the composition process. One example would involve using the principles of compressed conflict as the operational mechanism for the problem as given (again, the abstract walking can be used).

To get started in this phase, the group might consider certain facts that are associated with walking: exertion, travel, the earth revolves, and gains time in a direction called east. The group might soon discover that walking eastward actually takes one into the future, a term that comes from the abstraction, time; if walking east backward is the strange made familiar it could be considered stepping backward into the future. Conversely, if the walker reversed the direction, it could be concluded that the process might be labeled walking forward into the past. This discovery carries philosophical possibilities not yet approached within the early steps of the synectic process: Has the ability to walk played a major role in determining the human species' role on earth? Does our ability to move in this way have anything to do with our social structures?... perception of the stationery world?... willingness to invent vehicles that require little physical exertion to operate? Wasn't astronaut Alan Shepard's walk on the moon
actually a walk atop a source of mystery and legend for our ancestors? These only begin to 
examine the ideas that may be developed by combining time with the physical act of walking.

Prince views the importance of operational mechanisms this way:

> The most constructive element in... thinking is the use of the metaphor. Although it is not always done consciously, group 
> members and people in general make analogies between their 
> problem and another object or idea... When... analogies are 
> explored by the groups, they often bring a wealth of new 
> material to the problem -- contexts and ways of speculating 
> that never come up if the members concentrate only on the 
> specifics of the problem. (The Practice of Creativity 76-77)

These contentions exemplify how the use of an operational mechanism "pushes and pulls 
the problem as understood". Problem as given is no longer a simple abstract; it has evolved into 
ideas that have concrete merit due to their surviving the first four steps of this process. The 
argument that any idea could be drawn by any number of persons participating in this process is 
precisely the point; creativity is taking place in both the group and the individual. The action of 
communication has allowed the individual to share ideas with others who may not have conceived 
such possibilities, and vice versa.

In fact, after the dramatic change brought about by the use of the operational 
mechanism, the problem as understood portion of this exercise seems very foreign. The 
operational mechanism has altered the pragmatic notion of determining how one would see while 
walking a certain way and how this may be perceived. The advantage to the writer is immense in 
that the ideas being created have developed from their novel beginnings into entertaining notions 
involving the concept of time, the relationship between time and travel, as well as the effect of 
conviviality of what are considered day to day occurrences.

The Familiar Made Strange is the attempt to "distort, invert, or transpose the 
everyday ways of looking and responding which render the world a secure and familiar place" 
(Prince, "The Operational Mechanism of Synectics" 5). The familiar world would not see a need 
for a person to walk backward in an attempt to go back into time. But if conventional methods of
walking were reversed as a means of defeating time, wouldn't the entire world see itself in a different way? Priorities would change. One might argue that this manner of thinking only replaces one conventional approach to life with another, but as Prince points out:

The layman sees the familiar tree as a collection of solids in an otherwise empty space. The sculptor consciously may invert his world and see the tree as a series of voids or holes carved within the solid block of the air. (5)

Making the familiar strange isn't much different from than telling one's students, "Take a look at all sides of a topic." The synectic process gives students a chance to share their knowledge and discovery of all those sides.

**Psychological States** refer to "the mind's attitude toward the problem as understood." (see Appendix 1). It is a time for the writer to develop a critical approach to the task at hand and to think about the ramifications that accompany the physical act of writing. As Murray puts it:

He [the writer] spends a great deal of his time researching, thinking, mining his specifics and perceiving the patterns in them. (75)

This is the step in the synectic process where the writer is expected to ease away from the group, mentally, in an effort to assess the problem. Also, the leader of the group must be conscious that each writer must eventually begin the physical act of writing. After participating in the group exercise for five steps, the writer has to determine how to place the patterns and combinations of knowledge gathered by the group into the written form. The psychological state of a writer is equally determined by physical environment and atmosphere. One way of insuring that this will occur is to have the group physically break up for a short period of time.

Simple as it sounds, the chance to break away from an intense examination of a topic helps to allow "his subconscious mind" the time to edit "out that which is unnecessary and brings up that which is necessary" (Murray 9). Upon returning to the classroom, a method, such as freewriting (Elbow 13), should be encouraged to immediately place the classroom environment
in a state of action. In short, the proper psychological states occur when the mental process of writing allows the writer to put that first word on the page.

**States Integrated with Problem** is the final state of understanding for the writer. This is a form of mental editing that occurs in conjunction with the physical act of writing. Human nature will determine that each individual participating in synectic discussion will be influenced by one state more than others. This step moves the individual away from the group and closer to choosing the operational mechanism most likely to help achieve invention through writing. It could be said that imagination, as defined in the first chapter of this paper, has been initiated, stretched, restricted, and stretched again in phases four through seven, then made to conform into what will become invention. What remains is for the writer to take the idea in its present form and begin writing.

**Viewpoint** helps to maintain the writer's perspective. For example, if the writer had developed support that was fact based it could be said that the writer's specifics were "actual." However, a viewpoint based on individual experience or observation may have the "potential" to be developed in actual material.

Specific problems arise for the writer throughout this step. Walking backward into the future would have as many problems of "potential" as any other problem developed with this method. There are distinct advantages to having ventured through the synectic process, however, the most distinct being the options created within the group, still at the disposal of the writer. Therefore the "technical insight," or knowing the way something works, would have to do with figuring out a method of seeing while one stepped backward into the future. Walking backward into the future is really more a philosophical approach to the problem as understood. The operation mechanism has introduced the subtopic time and the possibilities brought about by invention will actually carry a message that thoroughly examines the problem as understood.

**The Solution or Research Target** is a problem solved. The synectic process has taken the writer from problem as given through a mental maze of possible ways to understand
the problem. By participating in a class exercise using the synectic method, the writer has a plethora of new approaches to what was once an abstract term. The solution is reflected in a composition that supports what the writer has discovered about the topic assigned. Could the synectic exercise have gone a number of different ways? Surely, but that is precisely the point. With a controlled approach to creativity, the writer can examine any topic, not in a haphazard way, but in a manner that will show the lack of limitations in any topic.

Although the original nine phases of the synectic process allow the writer to examine a topic completely, adjustments can be made based on the circumstances involved in the classroom or on the instructor's style. Perhaps an instructor might find that placing students in psychological states for a longer period of time than allowing time for, say, problem as understood. As long as the instructor witnesses an increase in creative responses toward a given topic, who is to complain? Because synectics is a process that encourages creativity, it would also make sense that it is flexible enough to survive adjustments for the sake of an individual's pursuit of creativity, whether that individual be leader (instructor) or group member (student).

The goal of implementing the synectic process into the composition classroom is that creativity is approachable through a process and that creativity is very much a part of the writing process. A writer is faced with problems that may only be solved with writing, and the reliance on experience and chance may be overcome by sharing ideas with other writers.

The composition class need not be a hit-and-or-miss setting. By integrating a process such as synectics into the minds of students, the instructor is constantly helping each writer examine possibilities never before imagined. Instead of being left to the restriction of one's own experience with any given topic, the student is afforded the advantage of participating with fellow students toward a common, yet still individual, goal. Listening becomes a prerequisite to success, as does cooperation.
Finally, the synectic process brings metaphorical thought to the forefront of the writing process. No longer considered the exclusive tool of "creative" writing classes, metaphor and analogy remain at the heart of the synectic process. In the example exercise within this chapter, it proved to be the deciding factor that broke down the barriers created by conventional thought.
INTEGRATING SYNECTICS INTO THREE MAJOR CLASSROOM AREAS: DISCUSSION/PREWRITING STRATEGY/DRAFTING AND REVISION

DISCUSSION

The synectic process fits into the traditional classroom setting rather nicely. There is a leader and participants. The leader actually manages the process. It is the leader's job to understand the goals of the group, to protect the climate, and to create an enthusiastic atmosphere in which to work. In this process the leader is much "like the conductor of the orchestra" who must understand, with respect to the relationship one must have to the group as a whole, the leader's role includes being "a servant to the group" (Prince, "Synectics" 354).

The leader's most important trait is that of expert listener. Only by paying close attention to the discussion will the leader be able to implement the synectic process and direct it toward a successful session. If students are trained to develop better communication habits through group discussion, the process will become easier to accept and more effective through daily use. Because it is a flexible, head-on approach to problem solving, synectics allows participation in a controlled group discussion that can be easily reviewed, as well as reenacted, by the student after leaving the classroom.

Prince explains the leader's, or facilitator's, role (see Appendix II) in a way that suggests confidence, consciousness, and a clear sense of purpose as primary traits for being a successful leader. A firmness that insists upon all group members taking an active role must be emphasized and added to the above list. Yes, eventually the instructor does have to judge the writer's work, but that role does not have to interfere with encouraging creative approaches in the classroom. Even if the instructor prefers one-to-one conferencing as a way of
improving student writing, spending time to develop the synectic process will still achieve its
goal of bringing each individual student added perspective to writing topics.

Indeed, one must have a feel for the role of leader in the synectic process. Being
conscious of the group's goals and not manipulating its members remains a cornerstone
concept. Although this manner of leadership may seem "difficult to achieve," the pursuit of
constructive discussion demands a nonjudgmental attitude from the leader that may be
considered and acquired by all participants (Prince, "How to be a better meeting chairman"
107). This attitude may even help the members of the group to come to understand that
composition involves bringing any number of relevant parts into an understandable whole.
The experience of gathering seemingly unrelated thoughts or ideas by way of discussion is
directly related to the synthetical approach taken in any kind of writing.

Because of the metaphorical nature of the synectic process, the ability of students to
improve their writing through implicit comparison or analogy would undoubtedly be enhanced.
For instance, if the group is faced with "freedom" as the problem as given, the leader will
listen for information regarding concrete examples from group members who may have
considered this concept at one time or another. Suppose one member of the group was, or knew
someone who was, incarcerated. After allowing this student to share the recollection of
incarceration, the leader asks each member to associate what they have heard with a time their
freedom was restricted. Perhaps one student was once physically restricted within a hospital;
another recalls a time when disobedience caused his/her parents to restrict the student to the
house for a weekend; finally, a student shares his/her feelings of emotional restriction in a
one-way relationship with a friend. The group is treated to the various shades of the abstract
freedom with concrete examples. At this point, the group leader may encourage each member
to understand freedom by examining those things that restrict or prevent it.

"Participants are the heart of any meeting" (Prince, "Synectics", 354). While the
leader is directly responsible for the tone of the meeting, the remaining group members need
to cooperate and contribute if the problem as stated is to be eventually solved. Participants cannot carry pessimistic or antagonistic attitudes toward the process, the leader, other members, or the problem to be solved. These negative attitudes tend to destroy and remain the antithesis of good communication. Therefore, for a synectics session to succeed, total participation must carry with it a sense of openness that allows the imagination of individuals to achieve invention through the group.

Prince's ideas for successful participation (see Appendix III) deal primarily with the group's willingness to improve their situation or condition. Actually, Prince's suggestions for the actions and attitudes of the group (take notes, don't censor other's ideas, practice open-mindedness) are neither revolutionary or new. They are everyday approaches to communication situations that just happen to fit into an organized approach to solve a particular problem. However, there are relatively few situations in a composition class where discussion directly addresses problem solving or where critical thinking is stressed prior to drafting.

Consciousness, imagination, and invention are essential to the success of the synectic process and should be encouraged at all cost. Because the leader does not have to be concerned with the limitations of any problem or topic being discussed, group members are encouraged by the process to venture beyond conventional thought. This is great news for those instructors whose freshmen seem to view the conventions accepted within a peer group as the only viable vehicle for truth. The possibilities that a group can combine creative instincts with fact to achieve a desired result is an attractive proposal for any educator to consider.

Allowing the group to become familiar with the metaphorical operational mechanisms is a matter of familiarization and repetition. Metaphors stretch the possibilities that exist within a language and, subsequently, communication using the language. In his article "The art of thinking in analogies circumvents boredom and enhances learning," Jacques Jimenez
reflects an example of how a teacher helped direct his science students toward creative responses starting with the topic *The atmosphere and solar radiation*:

Breathing was to be considered irrelevant in this study of the functions of the atmosphere. The teacher wanted the students to figure out for themselves, under the influence of guiding question, what effects the atmosphere has on solar radiation. To build up toward that matter, he put the students, in imagination, in a place without an atmosphere, the moon, and asked six questions:

1. Assuming you can breathe there, what would you die of on the dark side of the moon?
2. What would you die of on the bright side?
3. What feature of the dark side would keep you alive on the bright side?
4. What feature of the bright side would keep you alive on the dark side?
5. How did NASA keep men alive on the moon?
6. What, then, is the earth’s space suit?

Questions 1 through 5 were clearly a build-up to the metaphorical question.

So far, the unit covered the atmosphere’s ability to reject harmful and accept helpful radiation. A further question, though, concerned the atmosphere’s function in distributing heat energy over the earth more or less evenly. A comparison of the extremes of lunar temperatures was made with the highest and lowest temperatures in, say, Vermont on a hot summer and a cold winter day. What is pulling the extremes closer together in the earth than they are on the moon? Or, in the standard metaphor used in earth science, how does the atmosphere “balance” the earth’s energy “budget”? Instead of using the metaphor as a piece of jargon, the teacher used it to provoke thought, asking these three questions:

1. What does balancing a budget mean?
2. How is the energy budget arriving from the sun at the earth out of balance?
3. How does the atmosphere balance the budget; that is, assessing the surplus to the deficit?

The two metaphors of space suit and balancing a budget enabled the students to think through for themselves the interaction of the atmosphere and solar radiation. (34–35)

Even though the previous example was designed for a junior high science class, it is intriguing enough to consider for use at the freshman composition level. By approaching
problem-solving with metaphors, students of many disciplines will find increased options in obtaining solutions. It is again important to note the need to educate one's students in metaphorical thought; metaphorical thought allows for choices that, at first glance, do not necessarily relate to the problem as given, but with time and effort are seen as conceivable solutions. The idea that all things are interconnected becomes more fathomable when one is allowed and encouraged to experiment with relationships not always associated with one another.

**PREWRITING STRATEGY**

Discussion in a composition class begins the synectic process and sets the groundwork for an individual's journey into reflection of ideas on paper. Prewriting is the connection between synectic discussion and drafting, due primarily to the similarities between the two functions. Where drafting demands a stricter adherence to critical and technical examination, prewriting can be an unstructured reflection of the mind's eye. Students who participate in synectic discussion should be encouraged to write their ideas down as quickly as possible and in any form that suits quick written recall. Calling upon an overflowing subconscious will undoubtedly produce more relative information than trying to pick up ideas hours after discussion has taken place. "Writer's block" vanishes, is not even a legitimate concern, when words are placed on paper without concern for their structure. The audience for a prewriter is that writer, and who better knows the significance of randomly placed symbols than the originator?

In prewriting, specifics need not be of the primary concern; in synectic prewriting, ambiguity is a key factor in the success of the process. An example would be the ambiguous topic "walking" used in Chapter 2 of this paper. Certainly, the very nature of the topic allows for experimentation, rather than blatantly accepting the more specific "walking is a mode of transportation to get from Point A to Point B, describe in detail the physical parts involved in this trip."

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By sharing in the synectic exercise, the student realizes an ability to collect information on a vague topic for the purpose of eventually developing a specific, and usually quite individual, response. Constantly dealing with specifics encourages analytical thought, whereas in ambiguity lies the synectic ideal: "thinking that identifies likenesses and connections, that is experiential and metaphorical rather than theoretical and logical" (Samples 43). And, according to Robert D. Strom and Guillermina Engelbrecht in their article "Creative Peer Teaching,"... the inhabitants of this world will... have to tolerate a higher degree of ambiguity... The picture is of an environment in which only a creative individual can flourish" (93). Problem solving requires that its participants be given room to operate with all the possibilities of the problem being exposed.

Bob Samples explains the advantages of starting students toward problem solving with ambiguity this way:

Ambiguity is central to problem solving because it is the parent of decision. In the presence of ambiguity, students must decide -- they must make a choice -- or they cannot continue. When I tell students to find a million of something and prove it, they must define the problem for themselves, they must decide where to look, they must determine where to gather information, and they must consider various possible proofs and choose the best method for presenting them. If I give them specifics or examples, I have to make all the choices for them. (43)

Traditionally, composition classes have depended on groups of well-developed approaches to essays. These topics are usually well-written sentences that form paragraphs intended to lead the student writer through the problem by way of chronological clues. For instance, a typical composition class essay topic might read:

Many times our expectations for the future are quite different from what we actually experience. For example, a person in junior high school expects that high school will be a different way, but, when he gets to high school, he finds that it is not at all what he expected. Or suppose someone is going to a foreign country or a new place to live. Before going, he imagines what a new place will be like. But then he goes there and
experiences what before had only been in his imagination. And it is very different.

Describe a time in your life when your expectations for the future turned into a reality quite different from what you had imagined it would.

This topic as written attempts to give the writer the requisite amount of information to solve the problem. It tries, but fails, to encapsulate what synectic discussion would uncover, and completely discounts the student who, quite simply, does not “expect” in the same way the writer of the topic does. Instead of emptying a mindful on new found thought in a prewrite, the student is restricted to the experiences of the topic’s originator.

The synectic process would be more inclined to examine the ambiguity implied by the topic. The word future stands out. It holds a variety of meaning to each participant in the synectic group. After synectic discussion, each student writer would have the added advantage of having shared ideas on the word. In his article, “Learning Creative Behavior,” Sidney J. Parnes offers this creative approach to the word future:

We are always becoming, never become. If we are interested in the future, we see the present as a flexible springboard toward creating a desired future, which then becomes the next flexible springboard toward another, better future. (30)

Let us assume the instructor has provided this quote to the class during the synectic process and each writer in the class has done sufficient freewriting and, or prewriting to produce a first draft. The instructor decides to use class time to conference with each student. Perhaps the first group member has discovered a metaphor between the future and writing. Noticing this, the instructor reinforces the writer’s idea and suggests the writer consider making the familiar strange in an attempt to uncover a way of supporting the writer’s thesis. The writer has the ability, having experienced the synectic process in group, to compare the uncertainty of drafting with the uncertainty of the future. Or, perhaps the writer has noticed that the final draft of a project is never what it was expected to be at the outset and that projecting the future carries equal surprises. The list of hypothetical examples is endless;
however, the advantage of the using the synectic process in the classroom setting enables the instructor to use the same principles while giving the student one-to-one criticism.

By encouraging the group to develop their own topics based on ambiguous terms, the instructor not only risks reading original prose, he/she may find less preparation is called for. The composition instructor is trained to prescribe assignments. This is unnecessary when one considers the number of ambiguous terms that exist in the English language. Freedom, work, death, pain, passion, time... each holds different information for the individual group member.

The instructor must learn to trust that every student has an imagination and is able to develop a specific, individual writing topic. This is where the development and practice of the two basic rules of prewriting come into play. Prewriting is best served when one writes fast and hard. Pondering the rules of grammar of syntax while prewriting will only shift the writer's consciousness from the topic to the formal writing process. At this point, the formal writing process should not even be encouraged or considered.

Prewriting is that part of the synectic process in the composition classroom that prolongs the invention phase of the creative process. After the group discusses the problem, each group member has begun to invent ideas based on the discussion. In the human experience, it is what we call invention that manifests what is new into existence. The importance of helping to develop a student's approach toward invention is further expressed in the following statement:

The independent inventor, although faced with an inordinate number of obstacles, still continues to invent. It would seem reasonable to assume that some of these inventions could have a profound effect on our lives... Perhaps there are other Edwin Lands, Bells, and Fords in society... if they are not afforded an opportunity to overcome the obstacles, we may all be poorer for it. (Udell 102)

Prewriting is the reflection of what the individual has discovered during the discussion segment. Depending on the student's approach to notetaking, it may be written in
sentence form or scribbled on the back cover of a magazine. However, it must be written as quickly and thoroughly as possible. Once this is accomplished, the individual may return to this unstructured reflection of what was important to that person during the discussion and allows that student to relive the experience. Prewriting strategy sets the stage for what is to follow because the synective process has led each individual to the physical portion of the writing process.

**DRAFTING AND REVISION**

Following the synectic prewriting comes the first draft, followed by revision, revision, and more revision. Writing is a craft and, in order to learn the craft, the student must undergo the same process all good writers face. Synectics may be as much a part of drafting and revision, as discussion and prewriting are. The instructor may see fit to have individual conferences or grade each rough draft, but a third option remains with the group that continues to discover through drafting. Clarity and coherence are bound to result from sessions spent after the drafting process has begun for three main reasons:

1. Drafting organizes the ideas achieved through discussion and prewriting.

2. The students will approach sessions with more confidence if they have built a draft from information obtained in previous sessions.

3. Students will become more aware of the purpose of revision, that is to obtain the highest degree of precise and informative prose possible.

This paper does not suggest to an instructor a method of teaching composition. The synectic process is more an alternative theory, more an attitude by which the class is taught. It stresses two premises of composition; communication and audience. Therefore, an instructor may integrate synectics into the classroom without fear of drastically altering the method of teaching.
Metaphorical approaches to problem solving not only encourage a more flexible method by which to write, they may also improve a writer's analytical abilities. There is no reason to suggest that metaphorical thoughts would not encourage metaphorical prose. It would seem inevitable. But requesting a cutback in flowery prose is often corrected by the instructor's first firm note of distaste. An interesting conjecture with regard to cutting back flowery prose is that it grows back in interesting, more structured bunches. Messages are often remembered primarily for their poetics. The perseverance of clichés in all languages helps to prove this point. Because analytical thought also requires a language, a message touched by a refined metaphorical message would seem desirable from all professors of written English.

There is evidence that the literacy rate in the United States is a far greater problem than the writing of flowery prose. Statistics reveal "some 27 million adult Americans are funcionally illiterate . . . and 1 million children age 12 to 17 cannot read above a third-grade level . . . the language ability of the U.S. population has dropped ever since the 1950's" ("It's at Home" 54). Synectics alone cannot repair the complex social, cultural, and economic reasons that help produce such figures. But writing may be an ingredient within the anecdote to alter the problems of language within this country; the inclusion of synectics into the writing process would increase the strength of that ingredient if for no other reason than synectics encouraging one to explore individual creativity for the purpose of writing.

If there is to be a reemphasis toward writing in the schools at all levels, it would make sense to include additional information gathering skills, such as synectics, that would bring the craft even closer to society.

Classrooms are one reflection of the society and the classroom with a synectic approach will reflect open approaches to problems. A writing instructor may preach the concepts that are traditionally associated with writing, but today's student may lack the interest or background to do acceptable work. Instead of becoming frustrated by the student's
attitudes toward writing and assigning menial or remedial tasks, the instructor can open the minds of all concerned and interest the students in writing through their original ideas, at the same time synthesizing the technical aspect of writing to a more attentive class.

Solarzano says, "The art of writing can be boiled down to eight rules of thumb -- apply them well and prose can be made to sing." The following rules might be combined with the synectic process by an instructor interested in combining standard approaches to composition with synectics:

1. **Be yourself.**
   Many inexperienced writers believe they must acquire a style. Yet the classic handbook on writing, *The Elements of Style* by William Strunk, Jr. and E.B. White, advises: "to achieve style, begin by affecting none"... When style is forced through the use of highfaluting words or someone else's vocabulary, the result is writing that sounds false because it is.

2. **Be clear and concise.**
   ... Short words and sentences make a ... stronger point... William Zinsser, author of *On Writing Well*, calls clarity the first test of writing: "If you're not writing clearly, you might as well not be writing at all. And if you write clean, elegant sentences with as much simplicity as possible, style will eventually come."...

3. **Let nouns and verbs do the talking.**
   Strong, explicit nouns and verbs rarely need a string of adjectives or adverbs to intensify their meaning... "Good writing is like a good watch," declared Zinsser. "There should be no extra parts, and every part in there should be doing some useful, new work."

4. **Be correct.**
   Nothing irks literate readers more than to find commas sprinkled haphazardly and a subject and verb that do not agree... James J. Kilpatrick, syndicated columnist and author of *The Writer's Art*, observes: "The notion that a person can be a good writer and turn up his nose at rules of grammar and spelling is false. Bad grammar is like fingers across a blackboard: A reader won't stick with the writer very long."

5. **Write mostly in the active voice.**
   The active voice, in which the subject does the acting -- as in "the writer kicked the word processor" -- creates a
forceful construction that leaves no doubt about who did what to what...

6. Stick to the main point.
C.S. Lewis likened writing to “driving sheep down a road. If there is any gate to the left or right, the readers will most certainly go into it.” Rambling words, phrases, or ideas add little to the meaning of a sentence or paragraph. Instead, they just distract and confuse the reader...

7. Write with the ear.
...Metaphors... can give prose poetic power. So can alliteration... But when these literary devices are overused or misused, they may weaken or muddy a message rather than amplify it... "Beginning writers," He [Kilpatrick] says, "can cultivate their ear by having someone read their pieces aloud to them."

8. Revise, revise, revise.
...Revising prunes words that are unnecessary, tightens sentences that ramble and eliminates points that are pointless...

The combination of synectics to a basic approach to composition is valid if for no other reason than to obtain confidence in this combined system for all group members. This notion evolves from the consciousness that creative, systematic problem solving will increase "the mind's capacity to clearly recognize cause/effect relationships and confidence -- the real, inner feelings of security and self-strength not always consistent with the conscious expression of confidence" (Nuernberger 33). Both students and instructor can see that the advantages of creative problem solving and drafting are very much in tune with everyday life. Parnes expands the definition of creative problem solving this way:

Creative problem-solving includes fact-finding, problem-finding, idea-finding, solution-finding, and acceptance-finding. In the broadest terms, the problem solver goes from an examination of "what is" to an exploration of "what might be" to a judgement of "what should be" to an assessment of "what can be" to a decision of "what will be" to action that becomes a new "what is."

"What is" refers to our awareness of the facts of data concerning a situation.
"What might be" implies the generation of forward-thrusting definitions, approaches and ideas toward the realization of ideas.
"What should be" involves decisions and judgments as to our approaches and ideas.
"What can be" refers to our choices, adaptations, etc., of approaches and ideas into what seems to be a usable solution.
"What will be" becomes our best plan and forecast.

There is a constant tension between creativity and discipline. Without an openness toward the world it is impossible to create thoughts; the language one uses to convey ideas is a complex set of symbols that must be correctly formed to achieve an accurate message. When using the synectic process, the composition instructor does not need to choose between creativity and discipline. In fact, discipline is achieved through synectics. The conflict between these two forces remains inherent, but this conflict is reconciled because from form comes meaning and from meaning comes form. The synectic process in the college composition class brings form and meaning to the writer before a word is scribbled on the page. The group discovers as a whole, and, instead of overteaching, the leader will witness the creative development of students becoming "the next flexible springboard toward another, better future."
APPENDIX I

Problem as Given: ... The problem is given is the statement of the problem to those responsible for its solution. The statement may turn out to be an accurate description of the state of affairs or it may hide and confuse the basic question. It always implies a labyrinth of interconnected assumptions which may or may not be correct ...

Making the Strange Familiar: Any problem, no matter how old a chestnut, is strange in the sense that concentrated analysis will uncover elements not previously revealed. In this phase it is not important to resolve contrary elements so much as to bring them out into the open ...

Problem as Understood: Profound and determined analysis leads to this phase where the various atomistic bits of information about a problem are isolated for examination. This phase concludes the digestion of the problem as given ...

Operational Mechanisms: Analogies (metaphors) are developed which are relative to (and invoked by) the problem as understood. This phase pushes and pulls the problem as understood out of its rigid form of impregnable regularity into a form that offers some conceptual fingerholds. These fingerholds open up the problem as understood ...

The Familiar Made Strange: In this phase the mechanisms have done their job and the problem as understood is seen as foreign. It takes on an interesting cast as though never seen before ...

Psychological States: As last the mind's attitude toward the problem as understood attains the states of involvement, detachment, deferment, speculation, and commonplace which Synectic theory believes describes the psychological climate most conducive to creative activity ...

States Integrated with Problem: Once the states have been reached through the mechanisms, the most pertinent analogy is conceptually compared with the problem as understood. In this phase the problem as understood is liberated from its old rigid form.

Viewpoint: ... Each time that analogies derived from the use of mechanisms are compared with the problem as understood a new viewpoint is potential, though not necessarily actual. When the comparison is effective in leading to a technical insight into the problem as understood, then the viewpoint is actual ...

Solution or Research Target: In this phase the viewpoint is reduced to practice in terms of testing the underlying principle, or the viewpoint may become the subject of further research. The activity in this phase depends on whether the viewpoint implies the
mere reintegration of known materials in a new way or whether new materials have to be developed.
APPENDIX II

1. Make Yourself Thoroughly Familiar with the Actions... Those That Discourage Speculation and Those That Encourage It.

The actions mentioned in this first step are the following:

**ACTIONS THAT ENCOURAGE SPECULATION/CREATIVITY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Listen</th>
<th>Paraphrase</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stay loose until rigor counts</td>
<td>Protect vulnerable beginnings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take on faith</td>
<td>Temporarily suspend belief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assume it can be done</td>
<td>Share the burden of proof</td>
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<tr>
<td>Connect with</td>
<td>Accept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be open to</td>
<td>Join</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build on</td>
<td>Speculate along with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share the risk</td>
<td>Set up win/wins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make it &quot;no lose&quot;</td>
<td>Support confusion/uncertainty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledge</td>
<td>Credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value learning from mistakes</td>
<td>Be attentive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be interested</td>
<td>Show approval</td>
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<tr>
<td>Give early support</td>
<td>Eliminate status/rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be optimistic</td>
<td>See the value in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use ambiguity</td>
<td>Waste no energy evaluating early</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on what is going for the idea</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jump to favorable conclusions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Give up all rights to punish or discipline</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Take responsibility for understanding</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**ACTIONS THAT DISCOURAGE SPECULATION/CREATIVITY**

| Be pessimistic | Preach/moralize |
| Be judgmental | Assume no value |
| Make no connections | Take ball away from |
| Ask questions | Cross examine |
| Give no feedback | Be noncommittal |
| Put on a stone-face | Be critical |
| Disapprove | Be impatient |
| Nitpick | Interrupt |
| Be bored | Misunderstand |
| Be inattentive | Act distant |
| Pull rank | Get angry |
| Disagree | Argue |
| Challenge | React negatively |
| Discount/put down | Be cynical/skeptical |
| Insist on early precision | Point out flaws |
| Correct | Name call |
| Blame | Set up win/lose |
| Be competitive | Make fun of |
| Be dominant | Command |
Order
Threaten/warn
Do not listen
Use silence against
Put the burden of proof on other person (345)

2. Listen to Team Members

This is the foundation upon which nearly every encouraging action is built. Permit the speaker to paint any picture he wishes; your aim is to understand from his point of view. If in doubt, or if you think the team member may be in doubt, paraphrase to be sure that you understand to his satisfaction. This sounds easy, but it is not. You will catch yourself making judgments, tuning, listening to your own thoughts, and otherwise failing to really comprehend what the speaker is saying.

The importance of listening cannot be overemphasized. Skill in good listening has a pervasive effect on the team's productivity because it directly affects climate.

You will also on occasion have a member tries to dominate the meeting. He will have immediate responses and go in to endless detail if you permit. These people are usually bright and valuable, but they can ruin a meeting. You will need to control such a person without alienating him. Here are three ways of dealing with this -- there are others and you can invent your own:

When you believe you understand the point, interrupt to say, "Thank you, I've got it," and move quickly to someone else.

Avoid the compulsive talker's eyes when asking for a response.

More drastically, when you ask for a response, look at someone else and hold your hand to the talker in a casual stop sign.

3. Keep the Energy Level High

This may seem an impossible assignment, but it is not if you use the tools available to you. There are a number of things that affect the energy in a group, including some that are beyond our control. But there is a lot you can do. Here are some suggestions:

Your interest, alertness, and intensity are contagious, so when you take over as facilitator, give it your best. Use your natural body language: Move around, move close to a speaker, use your hands -- anything that is comfortable for you.

Use excursions lavishly when the group is tired. It is often like an actual vacation from the problem and members return refreshed and with renewed material banks.

Keep the pace fast but not hurried. Do not linger on any one step too long. When group members give signals of boredom, do something different.

Humor can be invaluable. If amusing associations occur to you, bring them out. When a member jokes, show that you enjoy it too -- if you really do. You are probably not a stand-up comic
and so do not push yourself to become one. Just be yourself, encourage humor, but do not let the meeting degenerate into a joke-telling session.

Surprise the group. After running a few excursions that are alike, run an excursion they do not expect.

Have a plan to shake things up for the session right after lunch, and for later in the afternoon. These are low-energy times.

4. **Keep Your Eye on the Client**

   When members are giving ideas, watch your client with great care. If he or she shows interest, check to see if he or she would like to pursue that line of thought.

5. **Rotate the Facilitator Role**

   Like the Pony Express changed horses, it is wise to change facilitators to keep up the pace. It has other benefits: This is a demanding role and until everyone has tried it, they will not appreciate the importance of their cooperation as a participant.

6. **Do Not Pussyfoot**

   Because climate is such a critical element, facilitators often believe that being very gentle and hesitant establishes a climate that encourages actions that foster speculation. There is nothing the matter with gentleness or hesitance if you are stuck for the right word, but you can be crisp and definite in intervention to protect the climate. It is your responsibility and you have the authority to carry it out. You will demonstrate that you are in charge of process.
1. **Pay Intense Attention to Yourself and to Your Impulses**

   You think at the rate of about 900 words a minute. People talk at the rate of 125 words per minute. Use only a small part of your energy in attending to what is being said. Use most of your energy in following the thoughts stimulated by the speaker. Even when your images and thoughts seem irrelevant to the problem, note them and attempt to connect them.

2. **Use your Pad**

   When you are "out listening," that is, out of the meeting, listening to yourself, keep notes on your pad. This way you need not interrupt, yet when the time comes you will have your ideas ready. When you get an idea, note it then rejoin. Do not depend on your remembering.

3. **Do Not Censor Something That Feels Important Even If It Does Not Make Sense**

   Let the group hear it. They will listen to it as a stimulus and may be able to make a connection that you were not making.

4. **Make Three-Step Listening Your Modus Operandi.**

   (a) Listen for flaws. (b) Listen to overcome flaws. (c) Go for an idea without the flaws.

5. **Practice Open-Mindedness**

   This means that when you are listening to an idea, you pay attention to the positive implication of the ideas as well as to the flaws. If you find yourself unable to find any positive implication, you know that you are closed to that idea.

6. **Know the Actions That Discourage Speculation and Police Yourself So You Do Not Slip into Any of Them.**

   Know the actions that encourage speculation and use them at every opportunity.

7. **Cooperate With Your Facilitator.**

   Even when you do not understand exactly what he or she is asking, cooperate as best you can. Guess, and do it. After the session you can ask questions.

   In summary, as a participant, your responsibility is to bring to the meeting your whole self and use as much of it as possible. (Prince, "Synectics" 354–355)
WORKS CITED


