

# IJPLC International Journal of Presencing Leadership & Coaching

## COMMUNAL REVERIE:

### *Introducing an Imaginally Inflected Presencing Approach*

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**Abstract:** Communal Reverie can be described as an emerging presencing approach (EPA) initiated at the beginning of 2021 (Gunnlaugson, 2023; Hinds, 2023). Its closest predecessor and influence amongst the presencing practice ecosystem is Baeck's (2018) *Collective Presencing*, from which key elements in its original procedures and guiding protocols were sourced. Adding to the myriad streams of indigenous knowledges, wisdom traditions, and integral philosophies and life practices that have informed presencing up to date, Communal Reverie has incorporated influences from mystical streams and philosophical frames emphasizing engagement with the autonomous productions of the deep imagination (Anzladua, 1987; Bosnak, 2007; Bourgeault, 2020; Burbea, 2015, 2016, 2017; Corbin, 1969, 1977, 1999; Jung, 1966a, 1966b, 1969, 1980; Segall, 2023). My understanding of the potentials of Communal Reverie practice are informed, at the deepest level, by a variety of convergent visions set forth by philosophers contending that imaginal practice, in its most realized forms, enables conscious participation with transpersonal influences of a subtle nature (Barfield, 1988; Bernstein, 2005; Ferrer, 2017; Gebser, 1985, 2024; Tarnas, 1991). Communal Reverie, to my present knowledge, is distinct amongst EPAs insofar as it is framed explicitly as a *collective imaginal practice* and, likewise, distinct amongst imaginal practices insofar as it approaches the group field as a source of communal imaginal revelation. This article will introduce Communal Reverie with specific focus on the theme of presencing embodiment (Gunnlaugson, 2023).

**Keywords:** collective presencing, imaginal, collective imaginal attunement, communal reverie, participation, presencing embodiment

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## I. Foundations of Presencing Embodiment in Communal Reverie

Gunnlaugson's (2023) call for an expansion of presencing embodiment research to include a more in-depth inquiry into subtle interior *processes* and *forms* of embodied movement that are not directed by or mediated through physical movement opens a rich space for inquiry into the intersections between embodied dimensions of imaginal and presencing practices, including how these intersections pertain to Communal Reverie (p. 199). Communal Reverie could be described as an EPA that advances an explicitly imaginal inflection of presencing practice through a unique approach to *presencing embodiment* (Gunnlaugson, 2023). Before explicating Communal Reverie's distinct approach to subtle embodiment, a brief exploration of the embodied dimensions of Collective Presencing will be necessary.

*Collective Presencing* relies on two interrelated embodied capacities that Baeck (2018) has described as *subtle sensing* and *sourcing*:

It is of course in and through the body that we register and identify our physical sensations, and that we are in relationship with what is all around us. But thinking and reflecting, on the one hand, and subtle sensing on the other, also only become possible through the body – because this is where you become conscious of them. Nonetheless, neither is happening in the physical body in the same way as our physical senses can be tracked; rather, both are beyond, or perhaps implied or enfolded. (p. 22)

Sourcing, fundamentally, is an embodied posture that intentionally orients toward *connecting with*, or *expressing from*, subtle energetic expressions of source. Baeck (2018) builds upon Scharmer's conception of source, describing it as a deep wellspring of *generativity*, a “place of infinite potential that is always present but that we tend to forget in our habitual way of living and thinking,” with which we may develop and strengthen our capacities for conscious participation (p. 119). Baeck has closely followed Scharmer (2009) in emphasizing that embodying source connection can facilitate the process of *emergence*. Sourcing, as approached in the context of Collective Presencing, takes place among relatively small groups or “circles” and unfolds as “participants in the circle speak to and from the middle” (p. 339). The *middle* corresponds with “the inner dimension, the inner collective, the inner plane of a group – for lack of a better word, the group's field” (Baeck, 2018, p. 211). Mutual attunement to the group field, then, becomes a medium for accessing the generative influences springing from source.

Trying to verbally explain *how* subtle sensing and sourcing are engaged is like trying to verbally explain how one opens and closes their hand. The knowledge is not abstract and propositional, but *embodied* and *enactive*. Even so, if I were to craft a guided practice for use in small group contexts that I believe would help lead practitioners into the nonphysical posture required for subtle sensing, it would be as follows:

*Feel*, fully, into the entire field of your bodily sensations and begin to tune into the space inside you as though you were *listening*, very closely, from the tip of every nerve.

Extend that sensitive listening out beyond the borders of your skin, to pervade the space surrounding your body.

Now, begin to listen to the *shared space*, the space around and between the group. Listen very closely to this shared space until you are listening *from* the space. Listen even more deeply, until you are listening *as* the space.

Now, feel the thickness, the depth, of this field of listening that you are, that *we* are. Allow this spacious listening to *expand* in all directions until it is *boundless*.<sup>1</sup>

In the early stages of Collective Presencing practice, what Baeck (2018) has called the *circle of presence*, the group aims to speak to and from the middle, engaging their subtle sensing capacities and mutually attuning to source, giving words to whatever emerges. This might be described as a *general* modality of subtle sensing and sourcing. It should be noted here that encountering imaginal content sometimes occurs spontaneously in the context of Collective Presencing practice. It may be said, then, that general sourcing may lead to encounters with imaginal phenomena.

Communal Reverie, however, aims explicitly at *focusing* the practice of sourcing toward a *shared experience of imaginal disclosure*. It is in this sense that Communal Reverie is an *imaginally inflected* EPA. I describe the foundational subtle embodied posture enacted in Communal Reverie practice as *collective imaginal attunement*. Before introducing this subtle posture, however, it will be necessary to introduce imaginal modes embodiment more generally.

## II. Modes of Imaginal Embodiment

Henry Corbin's (1999) introduction of the term *imaginal*, as distinguished from *imaginary*, has been increasingly influential in the contemporary cultural milieu. Direct experience of the *imaginal*, as I would frame it, has three primary characteristics. First: imaginal experience involves encounters, mediated by the imagination, with subtle phenomena that have a relatively *independent* existence from that of the imager. Second: imaginal experience demonstrates an *autonomy* and *intelligence* capable of acting independently of the conscious intentions of the individual who encounters them while also remaining *responsive* to the individual's active participation in the encounter. In other words, where there is imaginal experience, there is *relationship*. Third: skillful, conscious participation in the unfolding of imaginal encounters can play critical a role in service of realizing *dormant potentials*. In other words, wherever there is imaginal experience, the alluring pull of the *latent future* is potentially accessible. Drawing from and variously innovating upon ancient traditions, a variety of

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<sup>1</sup> This guided prompt is drawn from para-academic writing I have published via Substack (<https://reverician.substack.com/p/dispatches-from-collective-presencing>).

contemporary *imaginal practices*<sup>2</sup> make use of the autonomous productions of the deep imagination (Bosnak 2007; Burbea, 2015, 2016, 2017; Corbin, 1969, 1977, 1999; Jung, 1966a, 1969, 1979, 1980, 1989).

Imaginal practices always entail deliberate engagement with various embodied postures. While these postures may include ways of attending to physical sensations and kinesthetic movement, they also include a range of increasingly subtle forms of nonphysical embodied processes, ranging from ways of attending to energy body awareness to even more subtle modulations of mind and attention. These postures can entail a variety of deliberate shifts: into deeper ontological levels of embodied presence; in where and how attention is directed; in the intentionality brought to a given situation.

The essential foundation of imaginal embodiment occurs through an intentional posture that, while typically also entailing a relaxation of the physical body, first and foremost requires subtle shifts in one's mental state. A central premise here is that any act of shifting our mental disposition is always fundamentally embodied. Because imaginal contents are understood as continuously present and active, though ordinarily obscured by the activity of the waking mind, a posture of intentional restraint of mental activity is necessary for imaginal practice to proceed. Temporarily relaxing and suspending intentional thinking and critical judgement can reduce their usual veiling effect with respect to autonomous imaginal phenomena.

As Jung (1966a) has made clear, one of the major obstacles when engaging in imaginal practice is the tendency of the critical intellect to either judge and doubt whatever imagery spontaneously emerges or otherwise hasten toward formulating explicit interpretations of its meaning. Wherever such tendencies arise it can be helpful to notice this and deliberately relax the mind, suspending intentional thinking and critical judgement while remaining receptive to the spontaneous emergence of imagery. Romanyshyn (2007) has nicely described this intentional posture as *a gesture of hospitality*. While this is typically easier, especially for beginners, with eyes closed, imaginal contents can and do emerge even with eyes open when the mind assumes such a posture of imaginal hospitality.

Another subtle, nonphysical embodied posture that greatly enhances and enriches the practice of attuning to imaginal phenomena entails the deliberate sensitization of awareness to the *energy body*. Imaginal phenomena have been widely linked to conceptions of a subtle body, often

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<sup>2</sup> For readers interested in accessible entry points for directly exploring imaginal practice, I would make note here of two figures in the para-academic sphere who are making significant practical contributions to the field of imaginal practice, including instruction for beginners. The first is Rosa Lewis (<https://rosalewis.co.uk/>). The second, River Kenna (<https://www.riverkenna.com/>).

conceived as being irreducible to physical bodily phenomena (Bosnak, 2007; Burbea, 2015, 2016, 2017; Corbin, 1969; Cox, 2022; Mindell, 1998). Burbea (2014) has advanced a purely phenomenological way of approaching the “subtle body” or “energy body” that may be more accessible for modern individuals, setting aside any ontological claims about it and simply stating that “it is a perception, a way the body can be perceived which can be helpful” (p. 53). Extant recordings<sup>3</sup> of Rob Burbea’s (2015) teachings contain excellent guided practices for cultivating energy body awareness as a *way of perceiving* the body. These practices are valuable for imaginal practice because any subtle imagery encountered generally corresponds with felt qualities in the energy body, and thus deliberate attunement to the energy body can result in the spontaneous arising, enrichment, or transformation of imagery.

One may, for instance, engage in visualizations connected with the breath, imagining an ether of breath filling the whole body and extending some distance beyond the borders of the skin with each inbreath. Another helpful approach begins with imagining a column of light extending through the spine, perhaps extending indefinitely both upwards and downwards, and then imagining a bright aura of warm, colored light radiating out from the spine to fill the body and gradually extend beyond to generate a bubble or cloud of light surrounding the body. An approach I have frequently used, to great effect, is imagining a large bell suspended above me which begins to loudly chime and resonate, causing subtle vibrations to tingle my spinal column and every nerve fiber in my body, eventually extending into subtle vibrations in the air surrounding my skin which I can also feel with great sensitivity. In each of these exercises, the imaginative process should not be limited to visualizations (i.e., “seeing in the mind’s eye”) but also be *sensorially rich* (i.e., “feeling with the subtle body”). This sensorially rich engagement with the imagination provides a vehicle for awakening the direct experience of a subtle felt sense suffusing through and extending beyond the borders of the physical body.

Finally, imaginal practice may readily incorporate physical sensation and movement (Bosnak, 2007; Mindell, 1998). Although the level of energy body awareness corresponds with what Corbin (1977) described as the “subtle corporeity” of imaginal phenomena—acknowledging that both the energy body and imaginal phenomena are experienced as more subtle than physical phenomena yet more substantial than abstract thought—subtle and physical levels embodiment can and do intermingle and it is possible to actively participate in the interface between them.

Tuning into the subtle felt sense in relevant regions of the energy body can bring us into sympathy with the styles of embodiment displayed by autonomous imaginal presences, which we

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<sup>3</sup> For guided energy body practice instructions, see Burbea’s (2015) recordings titled “Energy Body Instructions” (1 and 2) in the retreat titled *Path of the Imaginal* (<https://dharmafeed.org/retreats/2678>).  
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can invite into our own physical embodiment through imitation. “To become infused with alien intelligence,” Bosnak (2007) has asserted, “the habitual self has to apprentice itself to the alien presence through mimicry” (Bosnak, 2007, p. 52). While such physical mimicry may be undertaken deliberately during imaginal practice, it sometimes occurs through spontaneous impulses whereby the body mirrors or enacts movements or mannerisms associated with various imaginal presences. In other words, imaginal presences can autonomously cross the barrier from subtle to physical embodiment wherever a practitioner is receptive.<sup>4</sup> This will be discussed in richer detail below.

### III. Collective Imaginal Attunement

We may identify clear correlations between the subtle modes of embodiment informing both imaginal practices and Collective Presencing: emphasis on deliberate habitual thought activity; affirmation of a subtle energetic layer of embodiment that both permeates and exceeds our physical embodiment; recognition of subtle sources of meaning, information, and creative allurements with which we may exercise an increasingly sophisticated degree of conscious participation.

Having acknowledged these convergences, we may also note crucial differences in the frameworks typically surrounding imaginal practices versus those informing Collective Presencing and other similar practices (Martineau & Martineau, 2016; Steininger & Debold, 2016). Typical approaches to imaginal practice have overwhelmingly foregrounded *the individual as the locus of imaginal experience* (Bosnak, 2007; Corbin, 1969; Jung, 1966a). This orientation, which I have called *imaginal privatism*,<sup>5</sup> corresponds with the recognition that imaginal phenomena are deeply involved in the process of *individuation*. In none of the cases outlined above are multiple participants encouraged to simultaneously attune to a shared field and source of imaginal disclosure. At most, the individual engaged in imaginal practice may be accompanied by an experienced guide or facilitator who assists the process by prompting subtle embodied movements<sup>6</sup> that help to further the unfolding of the imaginal encounter.

By contrast, as numerous practitioners of varied collective sourcing modalities have attested, there is *an intensified awareness of shared interiority* that can emerge amongst the group under proper conditions that does not negate, but rather *reinforces and enhances*, each constituent member’s

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<sup>4</sup> It bears noting that Jung (1969) was quite cautious here, expressing concerns that a person’s conscious personality can in some instances be displaced and overtaken by autonomous imaginal presences, a phenomenon he described as an *archetypal possession state*. Psychologically speaking, he considered this a great danger. While other theorists and practitioners (Bosnak, 2007; Burbea, 2015, 2016, 2017; Hillman, 1975; Mindell, 1996) are considerably less cautious about this than Jung, an essential safeguard against the loss of conscious autonomy can be maintained by deliberately and continuously regarding imaginal presences as *radically other than self*—that is, resisting any temptation to *merge or identify* with them.

<sup>5</sup> (<https://reverician.substack.com/p/beyond-imaginal-privatism-pt-i>).

<sup>6</sup> See Burbea’s (2017) recorded retreat entitled “The Mirrored Gates” for a detailed account of movements in subtle embodied postures that can influence the unfolding of imaginal encounters (<https://dharmaseed.org/retreats/3918/>).  
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experience of uniquely individuated selfhood (Baeck, 2018; Martineau & Martineau, 2018; Steininger & Debold, 2016). I believe this orientation hints at possibilities for the emergence of novel modalities of imaginal practice that reach beyond imaginal privatism through collective imaginal attunement.

Communal Reverie proceeds from the assumption that the basic embodied postures of presencing can be supplemented and modified by imaginal modes of embodiment. In other words, *the latent potentials sourced through presencing embodiment that pull for collective emergence may be inflected into imaginal phenomena that are sensed and disclosed collectively* (Hinds, 2023).

#### IV. Introducing Communal Reverie

Communal Reverie has drawn significant inspiration from Collective Presencing's basic protocol as a practical and foundational framework supporting groups toward development of basic capacities for collective imaginal attunement. The subtle posture for engaging this mode of imaginal attunement begins with all members turning their subtle sensing capacities toward the group field while simultaneously adopting a receptive posture of hospitality toward the spontaneous emergence of imaginal phenomena (Hinds, 2023). As an addendum to the guided practice provided above, I would add this final nonphysical embodied gesture as the key step toward shifting into collective imaginal attunement, with the caveat that other adept practitioners may take diverging approaches:

Having engaged your embodied capacities for connecting with the group field through subtle sensing, now make yourself receptive to any *imagery* that may spontaneously emerge. If any doubts or judgements about the imagery arise in the mind, expressing thoughts like “this isn’t real” or “I am just making this up,” release those thoughts while *remaining curious and hospitable* to the imagery. Just for now, see what happens if you remain open to what spontaneously arises through the imagination, *staying with it and trusting it*.

As participants mutually engage this subtle embodied posture, the first person in the group who feels ready then verbalizes whatever imaginal phenomena are emerging for them. Generally, there comes a time when a person's imaginal encounter feels experientially “ripe” for sharing with the group. Reports may include a mutually implicated and intermingling awareness of bodily sensations, subtle body sensing, and imagery. When the first report of imaginal phenomena is complete, the speaker indicates this to the group to signal that the floor is open again for the next person who feels ready to share. This protocol is intended to modulate the collective attention of the group by limiting the field to one speaker at any given time for the sake of generating a higher degree of collective coherence.

One core invitation in Communal Reverie is to engage the practice as an opportunity to discover directly how, when practicing collective imaginal attunement, *spontaneously arising imagery*

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*encountered and verbalized by another can come alive in your own direct experience*, subsequently unfolding in new and unexpected directions autonomously. In most cases the session continues progressing in this way, resulting in a relatively continuous and coherent unfolding of spontaneously arising imagery from one participant to the next. However, there is no insistence that all subsequent imaginal content must always connect immediately or directly with what has come before. Even during instances where seemingly disjointed imagery is described, I have observed a general trend toward a gradually unfolding imaginal coherence in the field as the session proceeds, with initially disconnected imagery either coalescing in the imaginal space or otherwise seemingly expressing meanings that are intuited as symbolically related. There are, however, less frequent instances where imagery is shared that appears relatively or completely disjointed from the rest. While the ultimate reasons behind these varying degrees of collective imaginal coherence remain mysterious, I suspect it may be related to the degree of overall coherence in the field and the depth of subtle sensing capacity being exercised in the moment.

The full spectrum of imaginal modes of embodiment have been encountered during Communal Reverie practice. Reports of sensations or bodily phenomena at times ambiguously straddle the subtle and physical levels of embodiment. To take one example, a relatively recent Communal Reverie session included reports of imagery of jet-black printer ink in an office space with fluorescent lighting, invoking resonances with contemporary businesses and their operations, values, and objectives. Amid reports of subtly embodied imagery of *drinking* this ink, one participant reported feeling a predominantly “imaginative” nausea, whereas another began spitting into a cup, reporting that he was physically purging. In other instances, imaginal phenomena may very clearly cross the threshold into kinesthetic enactment. During an early Communal Reverie session, for example, one participant reported an image of a mother dragon fiercely guarding her egg. Amid this report, he spontaneously began baring his teeth, positioning his hands like claws, and making roaring gestures. There was a distinct impression that these physical, kinesthetic embodied actions imparted insights about the image that would not otherwise have been accessible.

Participants in Communal Reverie have regularly reported experiences marked by awe, beauty, wonder, and sacredness amid the unfolding of sessions. The overriding sense during and after imaginal practice is typically one of inherent mystery that resists yielding immediately recognizable outcomes or benefits that can be articulated in clear, rational terms. This, it appears, is not a defect but rather a feature of imaginal practice as such and therefore warrants some commentary and reflection.

## V. The Fruits of Imaginal Presencing

The difficulty of articulating the outcomes of imaginal practice reflects the character of the

imaginal as such, which entails a shift away from the register of rational-conceptual cognition and into a register of richly *metaphorical* and *symbolic* meanings that are both deeply mysterious and inexhaustible (Burbea, 2015, 2016, 2017; Corbin, 1969; Jung, 1969, 1980, 1989). The very process of bringing imaginal phenomena to consciousness implies opening the possibility for rational-conceptual cognition to interface with non-rational phenomena. This dynamic interface between rational and non-rational elements may be construed as a *transrational* process (Bernstein, 2005; Gebser, 1985, 2024; Hinds, 2023).

While often leading to various conceptually expressed insights, imaginal meaning is fundamentally glimpsed *intuitively* and engages the practitioner in an infinite hermeneutic process. In other words, archetypal influences portray themselves autonomously in the form of imagery expressing a vast plurality of meanings that can never be exhaustively grasped, but are vastly enriched through a combination of conceptual, interoceptive, kinesthetic, energetic, emotional, aesthetic, ethical, and spiritual or religious resonances (Burbea, 2015, 2016, 2017; Corbin, 1969; Jung, 1966b). Even amid its inexhaustible mysteriousness, the partial glimpses of apprehensible significance disclosed through dedicated imaginal practice gradually yields evident impacts. Practitioners may experience greater levels of *beauty*, *wonder*, and *sacredness*, as well more consistent contact with *desire* and *eros* connected with *values* and *duties* felt to be deeply meaningful. These experiences can deeply inspire and influence courses of action and behavior in the world.

An essential dimension of the way imaginal practice yields its fruits also involves the cumulative unfolding of imagery as it recurs across *time* (Bourgeault, 2020; Hinds, 2023). Spontaneously arising imagery tends to reemerge through repeated imaginal practice—also, at times, outside of formal practice. While consistent meanings are imparted, new and unexpected facets of meaningfulness are also disclosed at different times, deepening and enriching the desires, values, and commitments connected with the imagery. As imagery echoes, recurring and reverberating across time, the experience of time as a linear process unfolding from past toward future is increasingly complemented, and at times overtaken, by a different experience of time as a complex and nonlinear tapestry of moments, entangled through shared archetypal meanings (Bourgeault, 2020; Hinds, 2023). Gradually, the impression of involving oneself in participation with imaginal phenomena begins to be counterbalanced by *a sense of autonomous archetypal influences involved with oneself*. Bourgeault (2020) has introduced the term *imaginal causality* to describe this temporally rich experience of transrational influences disclosed through imaginal practice.

When imaginal modes of embodiment are positioned as a way of inflecting presencing embodiment, such archetypal influences may be recognized as holding implications beyond the dormant potentials of practitioners' individual personalities, as imaginal paradigms have traditionally

emphasized. The intuitively inspiring and alluring pull of archetypal imagery disclosed through collective imaginal attunement find its deepest value in the possible disclosure of *synergetic potential*. Seen from this standpoint, imaginal phenomena lend poetic expression to *shared creative impulses* that enlist, inspire, and dynamically combine the individuated capacities of all participants in service of future possibilities relevant to the flourishing of the greater whole.

## VI. Two Examples from My Own Practice

To elucidate the foregoing descriptions of the fruits of imaginal practice and deepen the present inquiry into modes of embodiment, I will offer two examples from my own practice—one arising in the context of my ongoing unfoldment through personal imaginal work, the second in the context of Communal Reverie. These examples will hopefully elucidate the continuities between these two modes of imaginal practice while also offering a humble glimpse into novel potentials made available through collective imaginal attunement.

### VI.1 Whom Does the Grail Serve?

While on a Soulmaking Dharma<sup>7</sup> retreat during January of 2024, amid sustained practice of energy body awareness and imaginal attunement, I encountered a familiar sensation that I can only describe as concentrated energy just below my left breast. As I continued attending to this point of subtle sensation, keeping my attention focused attention upon it as it built in intensity, I was surprised by a sudden upwelling of imagery connected with the grail legend. The imagery was rich with resonances invoking the Christian mythos—the original context in which the legend originally emerged. Initially, I was not only surprised but admittedly repelled by this imagery, given that my personal emotional associations with Christianity were not particularly positive. Despite my aversive reactions, the imagery continued to flood in. *Christ. Blood. The Crucifixion. The unbearable totality of suffering in our world. A king. A crown. The mystery of the holy grail. The sacred commitment to serve what is good and sacred in this world.*

Gradually, as imagery of stained-glass windows and elaborate church iconography streamed into my awareness, the resistance began to soften. My heart opened to a profound sense of reverence, and I began feeling an all-embracing sense of numinosity that I imagined ancestors of mine had once experienced. While I felt no impulse, following the retreat, to claim Christianity as a literal or exclusive religious identity, I did feel as though the image of Christ and the grail were woven in as living mysteries in my still-unfolding spiritual orientation.

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<sup>7</sup> Burbea's *Soulmaking Dharma* stands out as one of the most sophisticated paths of contemporary imaginal practice of which I am presently aware, presenting a novel (and rather unorthodox) lineage of Buddhist thought and practice that incorporates innovations in occidental imaginal traditions (<https://hermesamara.org/teachings/soulmaking-dharma>). *International Journal of Presencing Leadership & Coaching* | June 2025 | Vol. 2, No. 1

Months later, I was in conversation with my friend Rosa Lewis, also a dedicated imaginal practitioner. I was telling her about a challenging situation in my life which felt profoundly daunting, confronting me with the limits of my capabilities. Despite painful feelings of defeat, I was on the verge of giving up and backing away from the challenge, convinced that I was in over my head. As Rosa expressed her opinion that I should persist despite my difficulties, I experienced an unprompted upwelling of imagery, reiterating the imagery that originally emerged during the retreat. As the visage of the king and the grail autonomously saturated my imagination, an unexpected thought entered my mind with surprising conviction: “I *am* the wounded Fisher King, I am *living* the grail legend.”

Suddenly, the apparently mundane situation at hand assumed a deeply numinous quality, as if exemplifying something sacred and timeless. The image of the wounded king resonated with my own experience of psychological disorientation and apparent lack of capacity to bring order to my lived situation so that I could competently oversee and achieve what life was asking of me. The accompanying image of the grail intuitively hinted at the possibility of healing and renewal, luring my attention away from self-preoccupation and toward the value of what I was being asked to serve. I recognized that my task was tied to lineages and communities in relation to whom I felt a loving sense of duty. As I connected with a sense of commitment to these values of courage and service, my view of the task suddenly took on a devotional quality and the idea of willingly persevering despite my seeming incapacity draped itself with metaphoric resonances of restoring a faltering kingdom in the name of serving what deeply matters. My whole experience of the situation radically transubstantiated itself in the light of this image-laden fantasy, and a fresh influx of energy and courage became available to me. While my doubts did not vanish, I was moved to persist with the challenge before me. Ultimately, I carried out my task with surprising success.

## VI.2 Lineages of Regeneration

My second example comes from a more recent Communal Reverie session that was held during a retreat that I co-facilitated, which also incorporated other group practices including Collective Presencing and Surrendered Leadership.<sup>8</sup> Amid the successive contributions of the participants involved in the session, a compelling world of imagery and subtle narrative was disclosed. Below is a partial, but sufficiently substantial, summary:

A caravan of travelers was journeying across the desert, in search of suitable lands to settle upon.

There was no water in this place. One of the travelers was the disciple of a recently deceased teacher.

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<sup>8</sup> Surrendered Leadership is connected with Transformational Connection approach of John Thompson and Sean Wilkinson (<https://www.transformationalconnection.com/what-is-surrendered-leadership>).

The teacher, on approaching death, had bestowed crucial teachings to this student in a sealed wax envelope. The teacher knew the disciple was not yet fully prepared to carry the teachings. However, being close to death, the teacher lovingly entrusted the envelope to the disciple anyway, trusting that the situation as given would have to be good enough. Deep beneath the barren desert, in a lightless subterranean cave accessible by a crevice in the ground, a vast source of water could be found. Below the water's surface, there was glowing orb of light. The orb pulsed with vibrations. This pulsing felt resonant with the image of a beating heart. There were intimations of profound grief in connection with this orb hidden in these waters deep underground. An intuition emerged: if this grief could be felt, if proper tears could be shed, then a corresponding rain would pour down over the desert and restore the barren landscape with verdant life.

This Communal Reverie session occurred close to the midpoint of the retreat, bookended by multiple sessions of other collective practice modalities. While there was a short debriefing period following the session, no hasty attempts were made to interpret or make deliberate use of the imagery.<sup>9</sup>

It was not until the conclusion of the retreat that I had my own experience of meaningful resonance connected with the imagery. After reflecting on the retreat as a group, including the dynamic contrasts and potential synergy between the various practices we had been engaging, I was suddenly struck by deep feelings of grief, unexpectedly sparking a felt sense of resonance with the imaginal disciple. I was spontaneously drawn into the fantasy that *I, too, am inheriting teachings from various elders. Like the disciple, I saw myself as being unprepared to the role of carrying these teachings out into the world and was gripped by a sense of *how far we as a collective have yet to go* with these various practices, including the collective development of our presencing capacities. The imagery brought me into attunement with my own conviction that these practices have a role to play in the regeneration of our ailing world, which in turn brought forth a deep commitment to honoring these traditions as best as I am able. I felt my love for these lineages and the elders who have transmitted them, catalyzing resonant intuitions of a bond of love binding the disciple to the teacher in the imaginal realm.*

At the deepest level, the imagery brought me into connection with a profound depth of grief about the urgency of our planetary situation—a grief to which I generally remain alarmingly numb. The image of the water deep below the surface of the desert lands came back to me, along with the image of the beating heart which, as I tuned into it, became synonymous with my own heart. Sensing further into the heart, I could not restrain the tears and began weeping for the immense suffering and destruction yielded by the extractive industrial growth imperatives that, despite our

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<sup>9</sup> Deliberately restraining the waking mind's haste toward explicit meaning making is an essential capacity for imaginal practice and exemplifies what the English Romantic poet Keats (1973) called *negative capability*, meaning the ability to patiently remain "in un-certainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason" (p. 539). *International Journal of Presencing Leadership & Coaching* | June 2025 | Vol. 2, No. 1

growing awareness, continue to drive our civilization. The tears also expressed immense feelings *care* for humanity, and for the many living species of our planet. I recognized just how desensitized I am to this care, and how the care and the grief are inextricably bonded. I could vividly feel my longing to assist in the birth of regenerative models of social organization that currently feel profoundly challenging to enact, given the pressures and demands of our culture as we find it, mourning the gap between the world I feel many reaching for and the world we presently inhabit and co-create. I intuited that *feeling this grief* was crucial in service to the world's regeneration, just as the tears in this imaginal world were bound to the restorative rains on the barren desert.

While this experience was profoundly personal, placing the imagery in resonance with my individual orientation, imbuing it with meaning and narrative orientation and amplifying depths of emotion that typically remain out of reach, I was not the only one for whom the imagery took on such resonances. Another participant later shared with me that he, too, felt a deep personal connection with imagery that surfaced during the Communal Reverie session, which for him took on resonances that, while metaphorically consonant with my own, were also very particular to his own concrete situation. He and I were connected in a sense of solidarity through our shared resonance with this fantasy, yet the distinctness of our concrete situations remained intact. Even in our distinctions, our shared experience of the imagery brought us into connection with a common sense of care and commitment. Another participant has shared, on similar note, that she felt a profound sense of *intimacy* with the group during Communal Reverie, as though we were venturing together through deeply primordial terrain. In appropriate resonance with the imaginal fantasy in this example, I believe this example demonstrates that there is much further to go with the degree of collective coherence possible in Communal Reverie, a topic I will address below.

### VII.3 Reflections: Imaginal Attunement as Gateway to Multiple Modes of Embodiment

Both examples above share some essential features. First, both cases involve dimensions of *physical as well as subtle somatic embodiment*: the unfolding of the emergent imagery was dynamically connected with somatic-energetic phenomena (the subtle sensation below the left breast in the first case, the heart center in the second). Secondly, both examples involved a dynamic entanglement of archetypal imagery dispersed across *time*: imagery that had been encountered in one moment later reemerged autonomously, resonating with a new range meanings and personal associations that had not originally been intuited. Finally, both cases involved the imaginal disclosure of *value*: the imagery demonstrated poetical resonances with my own concrete experience, which in one sense made the imagery more *real*, and in another served to disclose *metaphorical* possibilities within the situation at

hand. I could suddenly view my situation “as if” I were the wounded king, or the traveling disciple. While these fantasies drawn from the imaginal practice weren’t taken literally, this did not mean that the sense of meaningfulness disclosed through participation metaphors felt untrue. Rather, the images carried symbolic truths serving to disclose and amplify orienting *values* imbuing the situation at hand. Participation in the metaphorical fantasies enabled contact with grief and care that were quite real—and perhaps, too, the values informing the sense of commitment catalyzed by the imaginal encounters.

We might consider that imaginal attunement can act as a gateway into what Iain McGilchrist (2021), drawing from German philosopher Max Scheler, has called *value-ception*.<sup>10</sup> This idea is based on the premises that 1) value is not merely a human fabrication, but a deep feature of the cosmos itself, and 2) is only perceptible when the more embodied and poetically imaginative mode of perception associated with the right hemisphere of the brain is granted cognitive priority. Values, according to McGilchrist (2021), are timeless factors that “evoke a response in us and call us to some end,” and thereby “command our allegiance” (pp. 1122-1123). This description certainly applies to the examples above and adds another dimension to the modes of embodiment germane to imaginal practice—the *embodiment of values*.

At a basic level, value corresponds with what features of the present are deemed relevant and worthy of attention, as well as which possible futures are worth striving for and realizing. At a richer level, values orient our care as known by the heart, summoning from us those ways of being that we describe as virtuous. To embody values is perhaps the most demanding mode of imaginal embodiment, as it not only requires deep sensitivity and skillful attention but also commitment, and ongoing recommitment, to values through choice and action. It is one thing to glimpse value through imaginal practice, quite another to live in accordance with it. Yet, as we have seen in the above examples, the *grace* of spontaneous imaginal encounter—beyond what can be deliberately controlled—carries with it the potential to furnish an influx of energy, courage, love, and renewed capacity to commit to values even in the face of hardship.

The above examples of imaginally-mediated disclosures of value have a largely individual emphasis. The final example merely hinted at the possibility that collective imaginal attunement may draw multiple people into a common experience of values in direct connection with spontaneously encountered imagery. I anticipate that such experiences may reach more profound depths where

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<sup>10</sup> Indeed, Burbea (2017) has included *values* as a typical feature in his account of the phenomenology of imaginal perception. The idea of value, it seems, is emerging as a motif in contemporary thought from multiple angles. Temple (2024) has recently introduced the notion of a *field of value* that is genuinely cosmological in basis. Both Temple and McGilchrist’s perspectives on value have been deeply influenced by Alfred North Whitehead, who posited value as a fundamental feature of reality, establishing what unmanifest possibilities hold deeper relevance in the ongoing creative advance of cosmological evolution.

Communal Reverie approaches the further reaches of group field coherence reported by practitioners of collective wisdom practices, including Collective Presencing (Baeck, 2018; Steininger & Debold, 2016). Further practice, discovery, and development remain necessary to explore these potentials.

## VII. Directions for Further Development

Originally, Communal Reverie implemented protocols emphasizing the maintenance of a *receptive* posture in relation to the imaginal. Generally, the aim was to cultivate basic capacities for collective imaginal attunement without any specific guiding question or foregoing intentionality. This approach entails yielding to the autonomous appearance of imaginal phenomena and privileging the *descriptive* mode when sharing. Verbalization is limited to direct description of imaginal phenomena, excluding any personal reactions to, or thoughts about, the imagery. I would certainly regard this approach as strongly advisable for beginning practitioners.

More recently, however, new experiments in Communal Reverie have drawn inspiration from Baeck's (2018) suggestion that "by setting an intention, and then speaking and articulating it, we make an energetic connection with the potential implicit therein" (p. 582). Considering that "intention and potential are different facets of the same whole," the group field may be responsive to any guiding intentions brought to the process of sourcing (Baeck, 2018, p. 582). Prior to initiating these experiments, I speculated that guiding intentions for Communal Reverie related to a particular project or creative endeavor may enable imaginal disclosure of "future potential announcing itself in the form of symbol, metaphor, dream, or myth from which the wisdom group can receive insight, inspiration, and guidance" (Hinds, 2023, pp. 313-314). This could be imagined as something akin to holding space for a *collective making dream* related to *the soul of a project*, suggesting that certain creative impulses receive their determination and ordination at the subtle level, having their own ensoulment and relative autonomy vis-à-vis those who steward the projects (Baeck, 2018; Nixon, 2021).

Along these lines, the community surrounding Collective Presencing has in recent years introduced the term *sourcekeeper* to designate individuals with a source connection to a particular initiative or creative impulse (Hinds, 2024).<sup>11</sup> I have speculated that there may be *two degrees of group sourcing* with respect to creative emergent processes: collectives answering the call of individual sourcekeepers, and collectives answering the call what Ria Baeck has called the *group soul* (Hinds, 2023). The latter mode of sourcing marks a far deeper achievement and corresponds more closely

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<sup>11</sup> See Tucker Walsh's dialogue on sourcekeeping with Cheryl Hsu and Daniel Thorson (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=doCiqK8g-ec>).

with what Baeck (2018) has called the *circle of creation*, where the group converges upon and commits to a common creative purpose sourced from the group field. According to Baeck (2018), truly achieving the circle of creation marks an evolutionary advance in consciousness.

Since completing my dissertation, I have embarked on a small number of experiments with intention-focused Communal Reverie sessions in support of initiatives sourced and stewarded both by individuals and small collectives. The most recent instance of Communal Reverie being applied in service of intention-guided sourcing took place within Paul's (2023) emerging organizational model called the *Regenerative Community Organism* (RCO).<sup>12</sup>

Following the work of Anzaldua (1987), collective imaginal attunement also carries great potential in service of artistic movements seeking both to reflect and to effect cultural and social change while drawing from transpersonal sources. While Communal Reverie *per se* has not been closely applied in this spirit, Hsu's (2022) praxis experiment known as *Participation Mystique* stands out as a bold application of sourcing practices toward collective art generation.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, the Second Renaissance Collective's art manifesto and magazine appears as a movement toward source-derived creation of art, explicitly centering *interbeing* as a guiding principle, with the intention of both reflecting and reinforcing deep currents of cultural transformation (Barbier, 2024).<sup>14</sup> Processes rooted in collective imaginal attunement may be included as a generative embodied practice in service of such collective artistic endeavors.

Finally, deliberate practices aimed at fostering increased *collective imaginal agility* stands out as perhaps one of the most crucial domains for further development of Communal Reverie. Considering this aspiration raises a host of questions. For example, what basic practice protocols may be provisionally established for the differential distribution of roles whereby certain practitioners consciously prompt certain subtle embodied moves and postures for other participants who may thereby maintain more receptive postures of imaginal attunement? How might such role differentiation support conscious collective participation in imaginal unfoldment? How might such differential distribution of roles be skillfully enacted in a more *dynamic* fashion, with practitioners remaining open to shifting or trading roles amid the flow of practice? What sorts of guidelines and heuristics may be appropriately applied amidst the differential flow of roles in service of a more sophisticated approach to collective imaginal attunement? And, finally, in what ways might the usefulness of explicit protocols be outgrown, or even become counterproductive, where further

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<sup>12</sup> (<https://rco.life/>).

<sup>13</sup> (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lcK-fu6BtZ0>).

<sup>14</sup> (<https://secondrenaissance.net/art/>).

depths of imaginal *presencing embodiment* (Gunnlaugson, 2023) are reached?

These questions may only be answered in light of further practice and direct experience.

## Concluding Summary

Communal Reverie, as an emerging presencing approach that distinctly turns presencing capacities toward collective imaginal practice, engages presencing discourse and extant imaginal traditions while leading both in novel directions (Hinds, 2021, 2023). While the emphasis on individuation that has long characterized philosophical discourses surrounding the imaginal is retained, Communal Reverie opens to novel explorations in collective imaginal attunement potentially superseding the drive toward individuation in service of collective creative possibilities (Gebser, 1985; Steininger & Debold, 2016). While collective imaginal attunement has been thoroughly practiced and explored, there remains a wide array of potential directions for further refinement of skillful conscious participation in collective imaginal disclosure in service of creative enactments across a variety of contexts ranging from regenerative organizations to artistic movements and beyond (Barbier, 2024; Hsu, 2022; Paul, 2023).

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