

## FOREWORD

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This book is unique, a wonderfully original contribution to and for all of us—dancers, teachers, therapists, choreographers, artists—as it integrates concepts we have intuitively understood and that indeed, have diversely informed our disciplines. These ideas first emerged for me when I was a young modern dancer and student. My intent was to ultimately become a psychologist because I thought this field of human study would support the development of these concepts. The writings of Carol Press have helped me to remember that my original motivation to instead become a dance/movement therapist came not so much from an actual desire to practice therapy as from an underlying recognition that this new modality provided the best and, perhaps, the only arena in which I could explore my ideas about dance, the human body, movement, personality, behavior, culture, and creativity. My subsequent trajectory has taken me into dance performance, into psychiatric clinical work, into research in nonverbal behavior, into collaborations with other art disciplines and other nationalities, and into dance education. As the years have passed, I have increasingly realized the connection, the crucial connection, of the topics addressed in this book, as dance therapy practice and research have provided insight into processes that contribute to creation in dance, enhancement of performance, emotional health, and enrichment of dance education. This book has coherently formulated these insights.

Dr. Press focuses on creativity as an experience of the self that supports mental health and provides a broad discussion on how creative involvement, on many levels of subjective experience, connects us to our actions and to our values. The experience of self is closely connected to our relations with others and to culture, and this self-experience can be modified in diverse contexts. Dr. Press brilliantly sees modern dance as an art form that richly illustrates these creative connections. The roots and history of modern dance clearly support this perspective, from its beginning as a way to express feeling through movement to the discovery by dance educators that the study of modern dance produced positive emotional changes in their students. Psychoanalytic self psychology is seen here as an especially useful theoretical lexicon through which to examine these experiences. The focus in self psychology on empathy is directly related to the importance of what I have termed *kinesthetic empathy* in dance therapy, and underscores its role as the core of all dance and all nonverbal communication. And the phenomena of dance as primarily a group experience reflects another core concept of self psychology—the mutability of the self in the arena of new social contexts.

This perspective on the creative process enables us to better understand how it must be nourished, and in Chapter 4 Dr. Press provides us an incredibly rich analysis of this process in dance through the lens of self psychology. She delineates the ultimate transformative power of this process to both the creator and the creation. The experience of the great choreographer Paul Taylor is used as an example of this transformative journey, illuminating the steps of this journey through the concepts of creativity in self psychology—compensatory structures, archaic and adult healthy narcissism, transferences of creativity, the multileveled subjective creative process, and the desperation of a fragmented sense of self. Paul Taylor's choreographic masterpieces demonstrate a level of creative achievement that merges feeling and form, an achievement that is reflected in the power of his audiences' response on many levels.

This book culminates in a most inspirational vision. Education can *be* transformed and can *be* transformative by the creative engagement of both educators and students and such education cannot help but nourish and support the health of our society. I think that one of the most important ideas crystallized in this book is the crucial necessity for dance and movement in the education of young children. We are all aware of the role that dance can have in the support of optimum emotional, cognitive, physical, aesthetic and social development in the growth process of a child. How much more could this development be enhanced through a higher level of creative engagement in the educational process itself!

Dr. Press creatively examines this idea in many dimensions. I was especially taken with her description in Chapter 6 of her gradual letting go of set dance lesson plans and her ultimate reliance on her own creative process moment to moment in the studio. Her description of this creative process is analogous to the process of dance therapy because any therapeutic process is, at its pinnacle, an embodiment of the creative process. Dancers and movers exemplify this analogous relationship most strongly as their therapy work is channeled through the body, the source of creativity. Reliance and trust in creating from what one is given, through created structures, also inflect our educational experience, especially in dance.

This book can be sampled productively at many different points even though the sequential flow of its discourse is crafted with care and meaning. The alchemy of ideas is apparent everywhere in its pages. I feel that this is the book that many of us would have liked to have written! Its ideas will serve to unify the dance community by giving validity to all of us. I say this because I know that dancers and creative artists all intuitively understand that learning occurs intermodally, that movement expresses and creates feeling, that it strengthens cognitive patterns, and that the experience of dance can transform. We all came to dance through many paths and we all comprehend movement on many levels. Dr. Press has merged the paths and synthesized the levels for us, and for the rest of the world as well. Her book is indeed a gift.