

Creativity, Mediation and
Representation:
Toward Managing
Difficult Experiences

“Literature -- ...the attentiveness engendered by direct, profound, complex literature—reminds us of our duty to demand for ourselves—from the “situation”—the right to individuality and uniqueness. It helps us to reclaim some of the things that this “situation” tries relentless to expropriate: the subtle, discerning application to the person trapped in the conflict, whether friend or foe; the complex nuances of relationships between people and between different communities; the precision of words and descriptions; the flexibility of thought; the ability and the courage to occasionally change the point of view in which we are frozen (sometimes fossilized); the deep and essential understanding that we can—we must—read every human situation from several different points of view.”

- David Grossman, “The Desire to be Gisela”

“[We must] recognize the intrinsic value of illusion in itself. [This value] derives from the transfer of attention from the ‘Now and Here’ to the ‘Then and there’ – that is, to a plane remote from self-interest. Self-assertive behavior is focused on the Here and Now; the transfer of interest and emotion to a different plane and location is in itself an act of self-transcendence in the literal sense. It is achieved through the lure of heroes and victims on the stage who attract the spectator’s sympathy, with whom he partially identifies himself, and for whose sake he temporarily renounces his preoccupations with his own worries and desires. Thus the act of participating in an illusion has an inhibiting effect on the self-asserting tendencies, and facilitates the unfolding of the self-transcending tendencies. In other words illusion has a cathartic effect.

...It is true that illusion, from Greek tragedy to horror comics, is also capable of generating fear and anger, palpitations and cold sweat, which seems to contradict its cathartic function. But the emotions thus generated are vicarious emotions derived from the spectator's participation in another person's existence, which is a self-transcending act. Consequently, however exciting the action on the stage, the anger or fear which it generates will always carry a component of sympathy, an irradiation of unselfish generosity, which facilitates catharsis—just as a varying amount of high-voltage current is always transformed into heat.”

- Arthur Koestler, *The Act of Creation*

