Paths of My Development in the CCT Program

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by

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SYNTHESIS*

MASTER OF ARTS

CRITICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS, BOSTON

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* The Synthesis can take a variety of forms, from a position paper to curriculum or professional development workshop to an original contribution in the creative arts or writing. The expectation is that students use their Synthesis to show how they have integrated knowledge, tools, experience, and support gained in the program so as to prepare themselves to be constructive, reflective agents of change in work, education, social movements, science, creative arts, or other endeavors.
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ABSTRACT

This paper shows the development of a view of personal transformation and social transformation, and the creation of art that depicts that view through courses in the Critical and Creative Thinking program at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. The paper is a focus on the courses and their impact on the view and the associated art, rather than an analysis of the view and art. Since the program is centered around critical and creative thinking, the paper also describes how thinking in critical and creative ways benefits a project of vision and art. Self-reflection is also an important component of the program, and that activity finds its way into the development of the view as well. A summary of the view of personal and social transformation is provided, as well as a summary of the digital art and comic art that depicts it. The paper finishes with a description of the expected audiences, and the envisaged steps to move that view and art forward. The purpose of the paper is to be more than a description of how a view of personal and social change, and its associated art, could be created in a specific academic program. The creation of that view and art could occur in other programs and arise in informal situations as well. The steps and process shown in this paper are provided as examples of ways of developing a view and creating art that depicts it. The paper does not build an argument for a specific path for a view or for art. Instead, it describes a landscape where spaces of critical thinking and creative perspectives existed to enable a critical view and a creative art to arise.
Introduction of Synthesis

I begin this paper with nine courses in the Critical and Creative Thinking (CCT) program that had an important impact on where I am today. I then describe what was important in each course and how it affected my thinking and the development of those important concepts, and the communication of those. I then provide a summary of the nine courses and how those courses led toward my overall synthesis. The synthesis will reveal two paths of my development through the CCT program. Lastly, I describe how future paths of possibility could emerge through this synthesis. I also describe a future path at the Ph.D. program in Humanities at Salve Regina University, where I have been accepted for the Fall semester of 2022.

Reflective Questions in the CCT Program

Through much of my experience in the CCT program I utilized reflection to guide my direction. Reflection is an important component of the CCT program. Classes often begin with a reflective writing period to help students focus on their thoughts and feelings about the class. A Reflective Practice course also is available for those who wish to delve further into the art of reflection.

During our studies in the program, we come across various reflective processes. One process is named triple-loop learning and was presented in the Seminar on Critical Thinking course, and in the Synthesis of Theory and Practice course. Originally, triple-loop learning was created for use in organizations, as described by Wang and Ahmed (2003). Because this method is iterative, variations of it can apply to different applications. It can apply to critical and creative thinking when one incorporates the activity of reflection into the process. Details of this reflective mode are shown in critical thinking works by Serrat and Britton (2013), and by Ricketts (2021). Within this process of critical thinking, triple-loop learning contains reflections that ask,
are we doing things right,
are we doing the right things, and
how do we decide what is right?

When I look back on my experience in the CCT program, I see that I often asked myself similar questions. But I notice that when I went through the courses that I did not ask them in a specific order. I also notice that as I write this paragraph, I ask these similar questions during my thinking.

**Figure 1**

*Reflective Questions Through the Critical and Creative Thinking Program*

As a certified meditation instructor, I have been taught to watch my thoughts and let them pass away. In my own meditation practice I also work toward watching my thoughts as they arise. This work is not easy because it takes a certain type of effort and concentration. When you are still, and quiet within yourself, you may also notice your own thoughts. When you do so, you may see that your thoughts do not follow a linear process, and instead are likely to arise based on your feelings or environment.

I mention triple-loop learning here because the questions within it are similar to those I asked myself during the CCT program. I am not saying that I use triple-loop learning differently,
or that the process should be used differently. To me, each of us takes different pieces of ideas and ways of doing things, and we use them in different situations. The argument for using triple-loop learning is valid because it is a good method for thinking through problems. Even as I write this paragraph, I notice that I’m asking myself questions like those in triple-loop learning, but I am doing so in various orders and at various times. Looking back on my learning experience in the CCT program, I asked these questions depending on the situation, what may have been easiest to answer, or what seemed more crucial at the time.

**Synthesis of Critical and Creative Thinking Courses**

*CRCRTH602 Creative Thinking*

This Creative Thinking course was my first in the CCT program. When I think about this course, what comes to mind is the focus on learning about people who make a difference in the world.

My favorite example was Wangari Maathai (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wangari_Maathai), a Nobel Peace Prize winner who started The Green Belt movement which taught women to grow tree nurseries in Kenya (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_Belt_Movement). We may not consider her to be a creator, because her work is not about painting on a canvas. But her work with real landscapes shows how she creatively developed a way to solve an environmental problem in her country. For me, this highlighted how someone does not have to be an artist, musician, or poet to be a creator. Learning about people like Wangari Maathai and her work was important for my approach in the CCT program because it showed me that a path can exist for creative change in the world.

When I look back in my notes on this course, I also see that I developed my own concept of what creativity is. Underlying my concept was the notion that creativity is a personal activity
that can be performed by anyone. Within this concept, creativity had three main components — a familiar environment, a close connection, and a meaningful activity.

Those components were important to me because I view myself as a creator. In other words, creating things, almost anything, has always been an important part of my life and still is. A familiar environment, a close connection, and a meaningful activity help describe how I view and approach creativity in my everyday life. To me, creativity is a part of our everyday lives and is something we can do in different areas of our lives. As a person who cares about others and is compassionate toward others, I feel that every person is creative and creates in their own, personal way.

**CCRCRTTH 616 Dialogue Processes**

When I think about this course, what comes to mind are David Bohm and Jiddu Krishnamurti who are two of the dialogue experts we researched and discussed. I had read several books by these authors before joining the CCT program. Accordingly, I felt comfortable with the topic of dialogue, their method of inquiry and discussion, and their focus on trying to view problems at their source (Krishnamurti & Bohm, 2001). This familiarity enabled me to approach dialog from a viewpoint of looking at its fundamentals.

When I review my notes on this course, I see that I developed a conceptual listening process within the context of dialogue. This process included common aspects of listening combined with a conceptual foundation that I developed for the listening process. The purpose of my work was to provide ideas and examples of how such a listening foundation could be developed.
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What is important here is not what is in the foundation, but rather that I developed a foundation. It is the knowledge and comfort-level of developing this foundation that would help me build a different foundation later in the CCT program.

**CRCRTH 688 Reflective Practice**

This Reflective Practice course was one of my favorites in the CCT program. I enjoyed this course because it focused on reflection. As a reflective person I enjoy the act of reflecting, writing about it, and discussing it.

In this course I decided to go deep and reflect on an important aspect of how we interact with the world around us. In the recent Dialogue Processes course, I developed a conceptual foundation on listening. Since I was already focused on listening, I decided to investigate further and reflect on how we listen. More specifically, I created a project of daily sessions where I listened intently in different environments for 20 to 30 minutes. After each session I would reflect on what I listened to, how well I was able to listen, and what I was thinking and feeling while I was listening.

A reflective practice can be rather solitary and self-focused. That certainly happened in my case because my listening sessions occurred by myself — with no interactions with others. It also was focused on myself, and what I thought and felt not only during those sessions, but also afterward in my reflections.

What those sessions taught me was that listening by itself is not very interesting. I had to add my thoughts and feelings into my listening so that I could be listening about something, and for that listening to mean something to me. This understanding that we experience through our thoughts and feelings is the important part I got out of this course. I realized that experiencing as
a complete human with all of myself, not just a part of myself, should be a fundamental aspect in a foundation for experiencing.

**CRCRTH 603 Foundations of Philosophical Thought**

When I reflect about Foundations of Philosophical Thought in the CCT program, I am reminded of how comfortable I was with the course. I majored in philosophy for my bachelor’s degree, and I was not happy toward the end of those studies because I felt that the program did not apply to the real world we live in.

Accordingly, in this CCT course I decided to approach philosophy from the viewpoint of what is meaningful to our everyday lives. More specifically, I chose to investigate how our life is meaningful when we reasonably live, reasonably act, and are reasonably treated according to our own individual needs, desires, and goals.

When I review my final paper in this CCT course I see that my writing focused on being an individual person. In other words, we cannot live contently unless we employ our own thoughts, memories, and feelings in our life. In that paper, I also discussed our knowledge, and how it is our own personal knowledge that helps identify our own selves and provides meaning. (Suereth, 2020, p. 10)

**CRCRTH 611: Seminar on Critical Thinking**

When I consider the Seminar on Critical Thinking course, what comes to mind is how much this course focused on transformation. The literature and exercises in the course investigated how to change our own mindset and those of others. The course also investigated changing paradigms and how we could take the current way we see the world and change that to a different view.
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I remember that the literature was quite interesting, yet the exercises were difficult because change is not easy or simple. It is not easy to change a direction that I am personally moving toward. It is not simple to change the minds and directions of others, or of society in general.

When I review my notes and papers in this course, I see three areas that are important. First, I see that I embraced the topic of changing mindsets and paradigms. More specifically, I focused on changing mindsets that categorize and stereotype people. In our everyday world we can see the problems that arise when we categorize and stereotype others. It often leads to the discrimination, prejudice, and sometimes hatred of people in the world. Although we understand the problems of categorization and stereotyping, our brains tend to categorize everything they come across. Then, in our hectic world, it becomes easy to fall into categorizing someone without spending the time to know that person. William Isaacs (2006) describes how our language can move us toward categorizing.

Western languages, for instance, tend to be noun based. They tend to objectify the universe, to try to measure it, to capture it. This can leave us trapped in categories.

A different perspective from Jiddu Krishnamurti (2013) suggests that we place our experiences and memories into categories.

When the mind is no longer the centre, as the thinker made up of words, of past experiences—which are all memories, labels, stored up and put in categories, in pigeonholes—when it is not doing any of those things, then, obviously the mind is quiet.

My focus on categorization in this course is important because it centers on the individual person who has unique thoughts, feelings, and experiences. A world where we categorize others
is one where we neglect the individual characteristics of our own selves, and of everyone in the world.

Second, through the course’s focus on enhancing our own perspective, I see that I also focused on the concept of spaces. The term space is used in different areas of the CCT program to describe such things as the limits of a design feature or the bounds of the present moment. The usage of space can become an important aspect of our internal selves where each person has their own individual space that contains thoughts, feelings, and memories.

The third area in this course that was important is the concept of communication. In this course we are asked to look at ourselves, our work, and the world around us with a different view. Throughout my classes in the CCT program I had been communicating my thoughts through words, which is obvious since we are required to discuss our analysis and write papers in each course. In this Seminar on Critical Thinking course, I tried to communicate in a different way.

The literature in this course includes systems design. In that literature the design figures sometimes had a hand-drawn feel to them. I liked those hand-drawn figures because they felt authentic, and for each one I would imagine the author slowly drawing lines with care. It made the information feel more important and I felt more connected to the figures.

Figure 2

Example of a hand-drawn figure in Peter Senge’s, The Fifth Discipline (2006)
I started creating figures of my own and even created my own font that I drew myself. Later in the course we were asked to create an alternative sphere of engagement as a different way to communicate. In that assignment I developed a story and drew comic panels to tell the tale. My drawings were well-received from my classmates and this mode of communication became a new way for me to communicate.

**CRCRTH 601: Critical Thinking**

When I review my notes and assignments for this Critical Thinking course, I see that I investigated the role of empathy in our interactions with others and in our critical thinking. In my investigation I discovered some drawbacks and limitations of empathy that we normally do not consider.

One drawback of empathy is that it is selective. We are empathic toward different people and situations in varying degrees. It makes sense that I would be more empathic to my daughter, my cousin, or my best friend than I would be toward someone I don’t know and who lives in a far-away place.

Empathy should not be contingent on our proximity to suffering or the likelihood of it happening to us. Rather, it should stem from a disdain that suffering is happening at all. If the only people we are able to extend empathy to are those who are like us, who come
from the same country we do, or who share our faith, then we misunderstand what empathy is. (Smith, 2017, para. 18)

The choices I make to be empathic toward someone should go beyond my family and the street I live on. But if my empathy is reactive in nature then I may inadvertently be empathic only to people who belong to my country, my religious organization, or who have blue eyes.

My investigation led me to see empathy in a different way. It led me to see that because we are unique individuals with our own thoughts, feelings, and memories, we cannot know what another person is thinking, or feel what another is feeling. This view suggests that empathy is not effective in our interactions with others and that compassion, which can be more thought-oriented than an emotional empathy, may be a better way to interact. This perspective aligns with my developing view in the CCT program where each person is unique with their own thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

**CRCRTH 655: Metacognition**

When I reflect on this course I think about my investigation into spaces. I had wanted to investigate the area of spaces, but until this course, I did not have the opportunity in the CCT program to go deeply into it.

Spaces are interesting. When we look closely, we can see that we interact in the context of spaces. An old friend is in a faraway space, our work is nearby, and our family is close. We may even sense that our own self exists in its own space. It is hard to find examples where we do not employ space in our lives. The spiritual author Eckhart Tolle (2005) discusses being conscious about ourselves within our inner space.
Here is another way of finding inner space: Become conscious of being conscious. Say or think “I Am” and add nothing to it. Be aware of the stillness that follows the I Am. Sense your presence, the naked, unveiled, unclothed beingness. (pp. 235 - 236)

This metacognition course allowed me to investigate and discuss how our metacognition and personal knowledge exists within our own, personal space. I feel that this personal space arises in the way we interact with the world. We see it in our everyday conversations and in the way we think about the world around us. I suggest that we also use spaces when we think about ourselves and consider our physical and cognitive scopes.

When I review my notes and papers from this course, I find that I focused on how our metacognition occurs within a space of ourselves that is unique for each one of us. I also investigated how metacognizing about our real knowing occurs within our own unique knowledge space. Defining these spaces and being aware of them is important because it can encourage self-reflection and other metacognitive behaviors in others. These personal spaces are also important because they define myself, differentiate myself from others, and describe my own personal knowledge.

 CRCRTH 693: Action Research

In my reflection on this course what comes to mind is the focus on practical matters and action. For me, this was a welcome change from the focus on creating concepts and theory in prior CCT courses. Action research is interesting for me because it enables us to focus on action and a reflection upon it.

Action research is a form of enquiry that enables practitioners in every job and walk of life to investigate and evaluate their work. They ask, ‘What am I doing? Do I need to improve anything? If so, what? How do I improve it?’ (McNiff & Whitehead, 2016)
In this Action Research course, I could work on communicating my developing view, and reflect on using the art I was creating to depict it. This new direction on action was a welcome relief to me.

When I reviewed my notes and papers for this course, I could see how the communication of my ideas and view changed. Before this course my plan was to submit my original artworks to art galleries, art journals, and public spaces such as libraries. But this course moves us toward action and a verification that our plan of action is right.

Iteration is an important part of action research because it provides a process for putting new ideas into practice. Through iteration we try new things, evaluate them, then try other things that could be better. In my case it provided a pathway for trying different ways to communicate my view.

Reflection is an important part of what we do. We use reflection to determine what we like and what we want. Understanding these aspects of ourselves is important because we put more energy into things we like and want. The author Jean McNiff (2010) describes how reflection is an important part of action research.

There is no one ‘correct’ way; you must decide what is right for you, and develop your own views. To do that, however, you need to do some action research; the ‘meaning’ it has for you emerges as you do the research and explain what you are doing and why you are doing it (pp. 11 - 12).

In this Action Research course, I realized that I enjoyed creating art that depicts the view that I was developing in the CCT program. Earlier had considered submitting essays about my view to journals and magazines. But now I had a new mode of communication — art that is embedded with text from the essays, and a new target audience.
In a sense, my new target intervenes into the normal space of museums, galleries, and art magazines. Those destinations are creative by their nature because they exhibit art. But my target amplifies their creative spaces by combining art with a story and a view. Moreover, it is a story and view of change.

**CRCRTH 692: Processes of Research and Engagement**

When I reflect on this course, I think about how we were tasked to research what others have done before us and what they are doing today.

My focus here was to determine a communication destination for my digital art. My original direction was to show my artwork in art galleries, art journals, and art magazines. I also considered art destinations such as public libraries and various public spaces. I even brainstormed other areas that I could target. For example, a variety of journals and magazines focus on human topics such as social problems, racial justice, and personal improvement. My idea was that I could find editors who would be interested in showing art that depicts these human topics as an interesting addition to their normal textual readings. I felt that readers of these publications would appreciate the change of pace that an occasional piece of art would provide.

My plan changed as I moved along my path in this course. I interviewed an initial guide who is a person with expertise in the topic of my project. In my case, my initial guide is an expert in creating art, teaching art, and teaches in the Critical and Creative Thinking program.

In our interview, my initial guide pointed out that Instagram is now an important destination for artists and art. My guide suggested that I investigate Instagram as a starting place to show my original artwork. I then researched Instagram in peer-reviewed journals and found that indeed it was the most popular and important art destination on social media.
According to an analysis by Haenlein et al. (2020), Instagram is better than Facebook or Twitter for establishing new connections in entertainment related areas.

Connections on Facebook are, for the large part, online representations of offline relationships, while connections on Twitter are triggered by content relevance. These reasons are fundamentally different on YouTube and Instagram, where entertainment and the wish to kill time play a much more significant role. This makes it easier to become influential on those platforms since users may follow other users for their mere entertainment value, even if they have never met these users in real life (p. 10).

According to ArtBusiness.com (n.d.), artists rank Instagram high compared to other social media sites.

Artists and collectors alike will tell you they love Instagram because they can see huge amounts of art all at once without having to wade through tons of non-art-related posts, videos, news stories, discussions, announcements and so on like you have to on sites like Facebook or Twitter (para. 11).

In this Processes of Research and Engagement course, I also researched what others have done on Instagram.

More specifically, I looked for other Instagram accounts that address topics that were like mine. Here are ten of those Instagram accounts that currently focus on art and areas such as social transformation.

- artandsocialactivism - This account is focused on social activism and has festivals and events throughout the year. This is not mainly an art site - it is a social activism site that communicates through art.
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- art4equality - This account is more art-oriented, but all the art shown here has a theme of social equality.
- insightartspace - This is an art-oriented site that focuses on women artists and art that makes us consider aspects of our everyday lives.
- artistssanctum - This site is focused on artists who depict political and social issues.
- socialartnetwork - This is another artist-oriented site for those who create in the context of social issues.
- social_art_library - This site provides a space for artists to show work that has connections to social practice.
- culturestrike - This destination is an art space for a wide range of social change topics.
- theartofsocialchange - This is the Instagram site for The Art of Social Change podcast which interviews artists who contribute to social change through art.
- amplifierart - An active and varied destination for art that deals with social change.
- transformartgallery - An art gallery for art that promotes transformation.

In this Processes of Research and Engagement course my plan changed to a focus on building an Instagram art destination that communicates the view I developed through the CCT program.

Summary of Course Synthesis

In my reflection on these courses, it looks like I travelled two separate paths. The first path resulted in the creation of my view which began with my first course, Creative Thinking. In this path, I developed a documented description of many aspects of my view. The second path was the creation of my original art which began around the middle of my CCT program, notably with the Seminar on Critical Thinking course.
It is possible to consider my art path as a communication of my developing view, and if we look at it in this manner, then it is possible to say that my path of communication started with my first course. In that first course I composed and recorded a song and a music video for my particular view of creativity.

If we look further into this path of communication, we can see that it was a rather winding trail. For example, my methods of communicating my view were also through poetry and the websites I created.

**Figure 3**

*My View and Possible Communication Modes*

I tend to focus on my art as the communication of my view because I am currently embroiled in it. But this art also has a greater level of effort and a greater scope of possibilities that make it more prominent to me. It is difficult to total the daily hours I have spent on this art in the past two years. It is also difficult to gauge the possibilities that this art can have for others around the world.
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For me, the CCT program has provided a space of creativity and investigation that enabled me to develop the view and art I describe in this paper. Interestingly, this view and art are also their own synthesis.

The concept-art I have been creating contains imagery that hints at aspects such as social justice, knowledge, and categorization. I use the term hints because it can be difficult for an image to convey the same information as a paragraph of text. Yet the concept art contains text that directs the viewer to those areas. The comic-art series contains dialogue as the characters discuss in their everyday situations. That dialogue goes beyond simple conversations and moves toward aspects of the view.

The synthesis of imagery and text reinforces the synthesis of art and its associated view. It was not a conscious synthesis or integration, but instead occurred naturally through a need to better communicate the ideas in the view.

Summary of a View Developed Through the CCT Program

The view that I developed through the CCT program seeks a world where the everyday lives of individuals are important and meaningful. It is a space where individuals can better handle the struggles of the information, people, and situations in their daily lives. A place where our everyday experiences are more meaningful, the things we connect to are more important, and where we treat each other as true individuals.

In my development of this view, I focused on nine aspects that are listed below and which are described in more depth and detail in a website (Suereth, Pathways of change overview) that I created to describe them. I write these aspects here as points of departure that are not yet completed, that require further investigation, and that call for deeper reflection.
There may be several counter propositions that could be brought forth in response to statements within the view, however, the point of offering the view is not to argue its theoretical base or validity, but merely to present it as a premise for the creative work that emerges because of it.

- There are many aspects of being a person. A person is individual and unique, self-reflects, lives in spaces, is whole, is caring and compassionate, interacts with the world, interacts with others, is not an object, and is not isolated. When we interact with the world around us and with others we do so as individuals. We use our own thoughts and memories when we experience the world. We employ our own feelings and sensations when we interact with others. In this way, the experiences and interactions of each one of us are unique. It would be impossible for me to have the same experiences and interactions as someone else. In a letter to the theologian Henri de Lubac, Karol Wojtyla (as cited in Lubac, 1993), who was later known as Pope John Paul II, wrote about the significance of the unique individual.

  I devote my very rare free moments to a work that is close to my heart and is devoted to the metaphysical sense and mystery of the person. The evil of our times consists in the first place in a kind of degradation, indeed in a pulverization, of the fundamental uniqueness of each human person. (pp. 171 - 172)

- When we talk about freedom it is not simply a freedom to do what we want or travel where we wish. Freedom is not something that merely exists. It arises from our actions and our work; it requires us to act within ourselves and outside ourselves.
• We should think about knowledge differently. Our knowledge is an important part of who we are as persons. When we take information that is meaningless or ubiquitous, then call it knowledge, we may be reducing the importance of our own selves.

• For millennia, we have lived in nature as humans. Today, our connection is not as obvious in a modern world where commuting, television, social media, and cellphones predominate our everyday lives. Yet that connection still exists within us.

• Taking a step back from our hectic lives and reflecting can help us untangle our day's experiences. Reflection works here because it connects us more closely to our own selves, so that we are able to see more clearly which of our experiences are important and which are not. We are not only thinking beings. We experience and live through our whole selves. Our thoughts, feelings, memories, and experiences shape what we do and who we are. When we reflect, we should take an account of our whole selves. We should also ask ourselves, how am I feeling, what do I remember, what did I sense, and what did I experience. Taking all of these into account when we reflect not only makes sense from an intellectual view — it also feels right in the activity of reflecting. Reflecting as a whole human fulfills the depth and manner of our natural experiencing. The philosopher, Emmanuel Mounier (2018) describes this activity of employing our whole being in our reflections.

> While retaining the classical translation ‘contemplative action’, one should observe that this contemplation is not, for us, an operation of the mind alone, but of the whole man; not an evasion of common actions in favour of one that is chosen and isolated, but the aspiration to a realm of values entering into and developing every human activity. (p. 88)
- As humans it is important to experience our world in a natural manner. That is, we should experience in a way that employs our complete selves, not a portion of ourselves or an ideal of ourselves.

- It is easy for us to fall into a mode of categorizing people. Our brain works by finding similarities, identifying patterns, and classifying everything. This keeps us from seeing the real attributes of unique persons.

- We must realize that the person is primary in both our internal space and our external space. We must enable our internal space for the realization of our complete self. Similarly, we must enable our external space for the realization of our complete self and for the realization of others. The person is primary, and it enables both a personal justice and a social justice.

- Personalism is a school of philosophy that arose in the 20th century and has some similarities to the view described above. The main focus of personalism is the unique person. This view is different from prior schools of philosophy and is a reply to their focus on thought and objects. Although some movements had addressed what it is to be human, those efforts did not go far enough as the contemporary philosopher, Juan Manuel Burgos (2018) describes.

  This new perspective, however, only touched upon the person superficially. Descartes’s cogito, the Transcendental Ego of Kant or Husserl, the Marxist man, Hegel’s system, and Nietzsche’s Superman, all converge negatively in not having used the concept of person in a decisive way. But, in addition and above all, these theories did not take into account the decisive aspect which one only discovers when one values each woman and man individually: the presence of an ultimate,
irreducible, unrepeatable dimension, which turns each subject of the human
species into a unique who, that is, a person. (pp. 222 - 223)

In this new view there is a focus on the person as a complete being who acts in the world.
This focus on action describes the person as someone who thinks, feels, reflects, and acts
according to that person's own understanding and own needs.

One of the consequences is the revaluation of will, action, and praxis. Will, taken
to be self-determining freedom, is, from this perspective, ontologically superior to
purely intellectual activity. And thus a change in the philosophical focus occurs.

The primacy of intellect led during many centuries to a disproportionate increase
in epistemological sub-departments such as logic, critique, and gnoseology (the
theory of exact knowledge), along with a parallel neglect of action. Now, the
practical aspect, praxis in its multiple dimensions, becomes decisive in as much as
it is the medium in which man expresses and transforms himself; and finally one
becomes aware that, to understand man, one has to understand the many
dimensions of his activity. (Burgos, 2018, pp. 228-229)

**Summary of Original Art that Depicts a View Developed from the CCT Program**

Digital art can take many forms, especially if you are using it to convey concepts and
views. The digital art that I am creating depicts my view that I developed in the Critical and
Creative Thinking program. In my effort to reach a wider audience, I have been developing three
types of digital art. I felt that this variety would be interesting for me in the creative process, and
that it may appeal to different audiences.

**Comic Art**
The first type of art I am creating is a series of single-panel pieces that contain comic-style characters. The name of the comic series is Hopper and Lady. It is set in an alternate world with a grasshopper, a ladybug, and several other characters. The goal of the series is to depict various aspects of my view in a humorous and thoughtful manner.

In this series there is a connection of its situational matter to the concepts in my view. But this synthesis is subtle. The situations in the series hint at the concepts rather than directly describe them or discuss them. I employed this indirect method because it seemed appropriate for a comic series that should be lighter and more entertaining than an academic essay.

I liked the idea of creating a comic series because I felt that I could create more pieces in a comic format. Since the format is less formal, I also felt that I could address social concerns of various topics which could increase its potential audience. Here is a sample of a piece in the Hopper and Lady series.

Notice that this panel is square which is a preferred image ratio on Instagram — my social media, art destination. I am also creating these pieces in a 12" by 12" size and at a high DPI rate which may enable them to be enlarged for different venues.
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**Concept Art**

The second type of art is a group of concept pieces that have a movie poster look and feel. This concept art depicts my view in the setting of an alternate universe. There is a close connection of this concept art to the view because the art contains text that guides the observer to an aspect of the view. This combination of text and imagery can be a useful way to direct the observer's interpretation and experience. The text can also be an initial step toward engaging the audience in the view.

**Figure 4**

*Range of Interpretive Guidance*

![Range of Interpretive Guidance](image)

The text within the art connects to the concepts of the view in a direct manner. Although this text is simpler than the essays of the view, the text still makes a connection that is informative yet entertaining. Here is a sample of one of the pieces of this concept art.
This piece is in portrait mode which I created in a 24” by 36” size which is similar to movie poster sizes. The high DPI rate I used here may also allow the pieces to be enlarged for different venues.

**Technology-Oriented Concept Art**

The third type of art is a series of concept pieces that focus on aspects of technology that are related to the view. I felt that the technology focus would be engaging to audiences who are interested in technology and how that technology can affect humanity.

The text in these technology-oriented pieces connects to the concepts in the view in a direct manner. The text is also a simple version of the detailed essays of the view. Here is a sample of one of the pieces of technology-oriented concept art.
These technology pieces are also created in a 24" by 36" poster size. Notice that the text in these pieces is embedded in unusual words and characters. This is the PHP programming language which is a common language for displaying text on websites. My aim is that embedding a programming language within the art will be viewed as a novel and rather appropriate way to communicate in these technology pieces.

**Target Audiences for My Synthesis**

My target audiences include those who are interested in transformation, digital art, and comic-art. A synthesis of these audiences also exists, and that combination could be the most intriguing to target.
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**Personal Transformation Audience**

People who are interested in personal transformation are a target audience for my synthesis. The view I have described in this paper suggests a new way of looking at ourselves that is focused on the individual as a unique person with special characteristics. This is a perspective that each one of us should nurture and it can apply especially to those who are impacted by inequalities and disabilities.

**Social Transformation Audience**

Those who are interested in social transformation are also a target audience. The earlier focus on personal transformation extends to our social world by viewing others in a different light.

**Digital Art Audience**

Another audience is people who appreciate digital art which I am creating to depict various aspects of the view. Additionally, this digital art has a technology and other-worldly tone to it which can appeal to a variety of art and science-fiction enthusiasts.

**Comic Art Audience**

People who enjoy comic art are a target audience for my synthesis. Like the concept-art I am developing, the comic art has an other-worldly tone which can make my comic series interesting to a variety of viewers.

**Art and Transformation Audience**

Those who are interesting in the intersection of art and transformation are also a target audience. Here, my art and view are intertwined. The art communicates the view while various aspects of the view are embedded within the art as imagery and text. In a way, this art is unique because it communicates more than personal problems or social issues. It depicts a view — one
that is comprehensive and detailed — yet goes beyond that as it both communicates and contains the view.

**Synthesis of Future Paths**

When I began this CCT program I had no specific plan on what I should focus on or what I should do. I did have a vague direction that included how we experience the world around us, and how we can better live with one another. Moreover, I did not have a strategy on how to communicate that view. Creating art and using it to communicate a view was certainly an unfamiliar and uncomfortable concept for me when I began the program.

It was through the spaces of creativity in the CCT program, of trying new ideas, new ways of experiencing, and new ways of communicating that enabled the project I described in this paper to take seed. Through the spaces of advice and support from my peers and from CCT instructors, my project was able to grow in an environment that was thoughtful, critical, nurturing, and positive.

In the synthesis described in this paper, my goal is that people will see my original art and consider the aspects of personal and social transformation within it. But in a way, that is only the beginning because I dream that my view and art will go further. My hope is that when people see my art, that they will seek other pieces that also depict transformation. My hope is that when they see this transformation that they will seek my video commentaries on the art pieces. Those commentaries delve into the transformation and engage the viewer with questions. I hope that when people see those commentaries, that they will visit my website where they will find details about aspects of personal and social transformation. Perhaps they will tell others about this transformation, or even write about it.
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But more importantly, when they understand the perspectives in my art, videos, and essays I hope they will look differently at how we live in the world and begin to use aspects of the view in their daily lives, writings, and work.

Why I Developed This Project

Occasionally someone, who may be a friend, a fellow student, or even a professor, will ask why I have taken this CCT program, why I have developed the view I described, and why I selected the method of communication that I chose. When these questions arise, I must appear confused because I probably devise a polite reply that does not answer the question, or perhaps I stare at them without saying a word.

My reason for acting in such an odd manner, if I actually did act in such a way, is because it seems strange that someone would ask these questions. In other words, to me the answers are so apparent that the questions seem elementary. Perhaps, some short explanations would help.

First, the CCT program is a journey for each student. Each course enables spaces of creative viewpoints and critical thinking. Although the courses focus on different subjects, the students can apply the subjects to the area of their choice. For me, that area was often directed toward how we interact with ourselves, others, and the world around us.

Second, the view that I have developed addresses several problems we experience in the world today. These problems are explained in more detail outside of this paper as I mentioned earlier, but they are related to areas of prejudice, discrimination, and the general activities in our individual lives.

Third, the mode I have chosen to communicate my view arose through a combination of reflection, and trial and error. I landed on the mode of art because the opportunities to gain an
audience were greater than other modes I had been using. Additionally, I tend to like doing creative activities and developing art is creative and thus enjoyable for me.

In the context of the three explanations above, I find it difficult to see how I could have deliberately made different choices or have taken a different path. How could I not have continued my studies in the CCT program when it provided creative and critical spaces for investigating who we are, and how we can better live better with one another? How could I not develop the view I did when there is so much prejudice, discrimination, and suffering in our human world? Furthermore, how could I not have chosen to communicate my view through a mode I felt was enjoyable, useful, and original.

There may still be some who will extend the questions and ask why I would choose a program that enables creative and critical spaces of investigation. Some may ask why I would care about others who are harmed through prejudice and discrimination. Others may even ask why I would choose to communicate in a manner that is useful and enjoyable.

To these extended questions I ask the questioners to first pause and consider how those spaces of investigation could benefit themselves. How concern about prejudice and discrimination could benefit their own lives, and how action in these matters is important. I also ask that they consider being open to different modes of communication in their own lives, and to work toward trying new modes themselves. I believe that reflecting on these considerations will enable, within everyone, a space for investigating the world around us, a genuine concern about our fellow humans in a way that will lead toward action, and an opening to communicate their own thoughts and feelings in new and interesting ways.

*New avenues of communication*
The art and view described in this paper go beyond the normal avenues of communicating concepts through art. Together, they are unique because the art contains text from the view it depicts, and because it depicts a view that is comprehensive.

Within each art piece are simple phrases that convey information from the detailed essays of the view. These phrases offer a high-level description of the essays, but they also provide guidance to the observer of the art. In other words, they direct the observer toward the meaning behind the art. This direction can be important when art is created to depict a specific viewpoint. In a sense, it helps ensure that the observer, the art, and the foundational view are synchronized.

The art that depicts the view also is not only about an idea or an issue of social justice. The view that is behind the art goes beyond an initial level of concepts. It is a view that is broad, documented, and addresses personal, social, and philosophical issues. It engages the observer in ways that apply to a variety of everyday concerns through avenues that are meaningful and unique. As I move forward in my path, I hope to create additional avenues that benefit myself and my audiences.

**Future investigations and work**

One future pathway starts with my initial destination on Instagram which is a popular stop for artists and their art. By continuing to post art and commentary on my Art and Change Instagram destination ([https://www.instagram.com/art.and.change](https://www.instagram.com/art.and.change)) I hope to identify other destinations and opportunities that may include galleries and public spaces.

Another future pathway for my continued work is the Ph.D. program in Humanities at Salve Regina University ([https://salve.edu/graduate-and-professional-studies/humanities-phd](https://salve.edu/graduate-and-professional-studies/humanities-phd)). I have been accepted into that program for the fall of 2022. Throughout the CCT program I have reflected on what worked well and what needed changing. That reflection led me to the view and
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art I have been describing in this paper. But I feel that my path is not completed, and that further reflection and work is needed. Salve Regina has several dissertation paths in the Ph.D. Humanities program, and I plan to enter the one on cultural, personal, and social transformation. I believe this dissertation path can benefit my continued work and reflection that began in the CCT program.
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