

# BOOK REVIEW

## **Generative Trance: The Experience of Creative Flow**

By Stephen Gilligan

Crownhouse Publishers  
2012  
260 pages

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Stephen Gilligan has a well-established, well-deserved reputation as one of Milton Erickson's most adept students. *Generative Trance* demonstrates Gilligan's exceptional ability to carry Erickson's pioneering ideas forward, and further define possibilities within the territory of unconscious hypnotic work. In the preface, Gilligan explains his view of using trance to "elevate consciousness to a higher level of creativity" (page ix). The meaning of this concept is illustrated with his own autobiographical tale of transformation.

*Generative Trance* differs from

Gilligan's earlier books in that it is a more formal text. With outline clarity, the table of contents prepares readers for his direction and intention. Each of the nine chapters begins with a quotation providing a thoughtful prelude that orient readers to the unfolding richness to come. The first part of the book describes the framework, while the latter part offers somatic methods for developing generative trance. Each construct is logically explained in detail using a variety of teaching techniques. Readers will proceed with a sense of accomplishment, as the construction of skill building is promoted through experiential exercises. An illusion of simplicity guides readers through complex territory, inviting the engagement of unconscious capacities.

I initially read this book on a Kindle, and while it may be my own lagging skill set, I found my lack of ease to return to earlier chapters to be limiting. In reading the hardback version, I found it much more gratifying to go back and forth, repeatedly identifying reference points by reexamining earlier

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chapters. That process in and of itself underscores the complexity of a volume that initially seems easy to read.

The work is an invitation to embark on one's own unique journey. Gilligan's trademark intellectual querying, bridges information balanced with personal examples. The narrative generates an experience of participation -- as if one is sitting, listening to a timeless master patiently guiding a student along a learning journey. In its own way, reading this book actually constructs a generative trance, a holographic touchstone for Gilligan's process.

Gilligan's own rare depth of human sensitivity, combined with his training

under Erickson gives him an extraordinary launching point. With artistic precision, Gilligan does what Erickson taught, carrying ideas beyond the parameters of consciousness into the individual and the changing circumstances of the world today.

Gilligan's commitment to bring his own awareness forward is reflected in the opening of the book: "May this work help you make creative use of each moment of your life, no matter who or where you are" (page xi). Carried throughout the work, this idea is expressed in the epilogue as a parting gift: "May you awaken each day more fully into your deepest life path" (page 271).

# GENERATIVE TRANCE

Summer Intensive 2014 - San Diego, CA

**Stephen Gilligan Ph.D.**

**July 6-11 - Basic**

**July 13-18 - Advanced**

**July 20-24 - Supervision**

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