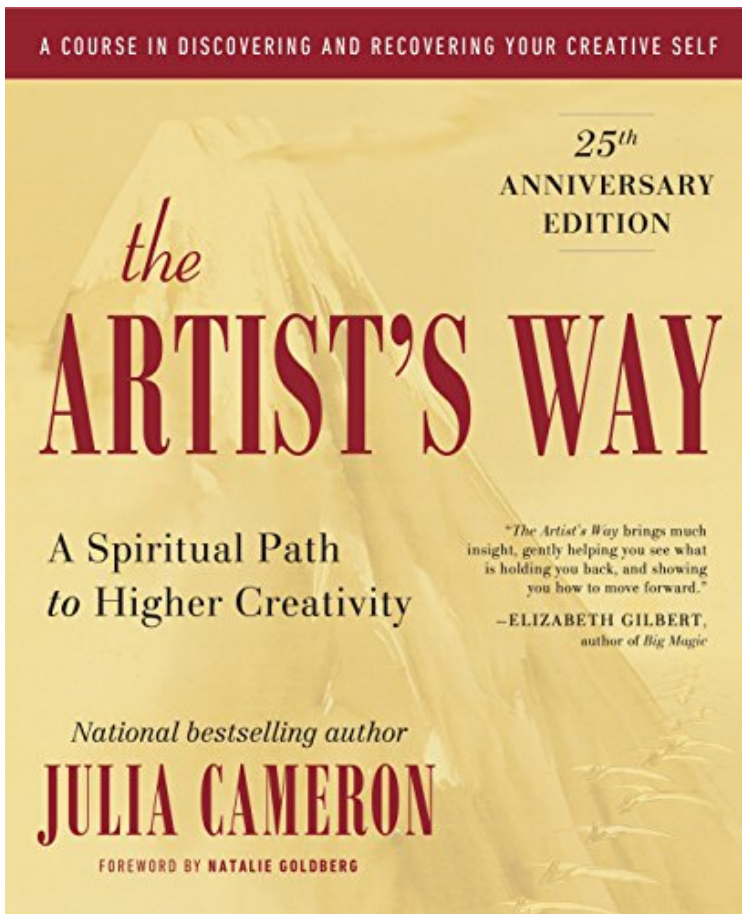


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# The Artist's Way: 25th Anniversary Edition



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Prsentation de l'diteur"Without The Artist's Way, there would have been no Eat, Pray, Love. Elizabeth GilbertThe Artists Wayis the seminal book on the subject of creativity. An international bestseller, millions of readers have found it to be an invaluable guide to living the artists life. Still as vital todayor perhaps even more sothan it was when it was first published twenty five years ago, it is a powerfully provocative and inspiring work. Julia Cameron reflects upon the impact ofThe Artists Wayand shares additional insights into the creative process that she has gained. Updated and expanded, this anniversary edition reframesThe Artists Wayfor today's creatives..comWith the basic principle that creative expression is the natural direction of life, Julia Cameron and Mark Bryan lead you through a comprehensive twelve-week program to recover your creativity from a variety of blocks, including limiting beliefs, fear, self-sabotage, jealousy, guilt, addictions, and other inhibiting forces, replacing them with artistic confidence and productivity. This book links creativity to spirituality by showing how to connect with the creative energies of the universe, and has, in the four years since its publication, spawned a remarkable number of support groups for artists dedicated to practicing the exercises it contains. ExtraitFOREWARDThis is the grand twenty-fifth anniversary edition of

The Artists Way. How deeply it has effected so many people. Back in the early 90s Julia dared to claim that each and every person has within them a source of creativity, that it can be watered and it can bloom. How democratic! How American! That art is not just for the elite, the special few struck by lightning. What she says is liberating and true. There is a hunger out there it continues to sell at a fast pace and be absorbed into our conscience. I've seen it on display in the obvious places bookstores, art museums but I've also seen it for sale on the shelf of a hardware store, a grocery counter, in a pharmacy, and at a map store. This secret of creativity has seeped over into odd nooks and crannies, out of closets, into bare sight. Julia Cameron is my friend. We share the love of place one of a writer's primary tools. We knew each other in Taos, New Mexico, where a deep source of our creativity sprung. I know her now also in Santa Fe walking her dog through the chamisa. One day when we were together and I was complaining about my life's trajectory, she turned to me with her blue eyes and soft smile and said, I want to never stop opening up people's lives. And she practices what she preaches, writing plays, musicals, novels and little known to many, bakes a terrific peach pie. She is also a deep and dedicated listener to a friend's woes. Julia continues to grow her inner life. People feel this in the book's integrity. May The Artists Way continue to enlighten, march on through the transience of politics, the zigzag shifts in our human life. May it continue to be available for a long, long time. --NATALIE

GOLDBERG INTRODUCTION TO THE TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY EDITION OF THE ARTISTS WAY I am seated alone in a cafe, dining solo. A woman approaches my table. Pardon me, she says, has anyone ever told you you resemble Julia Cameron? Startled, I reply, I am Julia Cameron. Now it is the woman's turn to be surprised. Oh my God, she exclaims, your book changed my life. It made me a novelist. That's wonderful, I tell her, genuinely pleased. I bet you hear stories like mine all the time, the woman says. In fact, I do, but it doesn't take away the thrill. Twenty-five years ago, I published The Artists Way, a book that I think of as a support kit for artists. Its popularity caught me by surprise. I thought I was writing a book for myself and a handful of friends. Instead, I wrote a book that spoke to millions. It had a central premise we are all creative and with the use of a few simple tools, we can all become more creative.

Creativity, I believed, was a spiritual practice. We had only to open ourselves up to the Great Creator working through us. We became channels for spiritual energy to enter the world. Writing, painting, dancing, acting no matter what form our creativity took, the Great Creator caused us to flourish. And so, encounters like mine in the cafe became commonplace. The sentence is always the same: Your book changed my life.

No, I often reply. You changed your life. You used the tools I laid out for you. I think it is important for people to own their own spiritual practice. My toolkit is simple, and it invites practitioners to embrace simplicity. A recent review of my latest book noted that the tools were simple and repetitive. I think of this as a good thing. The tools do not change book to book. The same simple tools that worked in The Artists Way work still, a dozen books later. In my travels, I encounter practitioners who have used the tools for years. I've done Morning Pages for fifteen years, a man recently told me. His Morning Pages three pages of longhand, morning writing, have filled journal after journal. He doesn't give them up, because they work. A woman tells me the second primary tool, Artist Dates, a once a week, festive, solo expedition, have given her a life of adventure. Used together, Morning Pages and Artist Dates do transform lives. I've given your book to my mother and my sister, a woman tells me at a book signing. It worked for all of us, she says. Now I want you to sign a book for my boyfriend. I ask his name, and write the simple phrase, May our words be friends. I trust that the book will work for him, too. I have come to rely on the book. I trust that it is indeed life-changing. Julia, don't you get tired of hearing our stories? I am asked. The answer is no. Creativity is never tiresome. It is always an adventure, one I have been privileged to share. I was a very unhappy lawyer, a Broadway actor tells me. Then I used your tools. Now I am an actor and a happy one. I was what you called a shadow artist, a thriving director tells me. I was a producer until I used your toolkit, and emerged as a director. I've worked with your book three times, and each time has led to a breakthrough. Thank you. Your tools felt natural to me, a fine arts photographer tells me. I used to create in spurts, but your tools have given me consistent productivity. Before using The Artists Way, my life was very dramatic, a poet tells me. I was always waiting for inspiration to strike like lightning. Now I know that my creativity is a steady flow. I write poems regularly, and without high drama. The poems I write are just as good as any I wrote before.

Sentiments like these make my years of teaching worthwhile. I am delighted to have been of service. I receive heartfelt letters thanking me for my work and telling me of the changes it has wrought. Occasionally, the thank-yous are more public. Novelist Patricia Cornwell thanked me in the dedication of her thriller Trace. Musician Pete Townsend cited The Artists Way in his autobiography Who Am I. While it is thrilling to have celebrity endorsements, the book is perhaps at its best helping the lesser-knowns and the help isn't

restricted to creativity issues. Julia, I was drunk in the outback. Now I'm sober, and a Hollywood screenwriter, one practitioner wrote me. It is not uncommon for users of the pages to face down difficult issues such as sobriety, childhood trauma, and obesity. The pages urge honesty in facing down demons. Last fall I taught in Sedona a class of ninety people. On the second night, a meeting was convened for all who felt the impact of The Artists Way on their well-being. Person after person cited breakthroughs to clarity and health. When it was my turn to share, I told the group that their recovery gave me great pride. I was grateful for their acknowledgement; grateful, too, for the many and varied strides they had taken toward mental, physical, and spiritual health. Julia, I am sometimes asked, aren't you afraid you are unblocking a lot of bad art? No, I reply. The opposite seems to be the case. The unblocked art is often very fine, and I find myself thinking, how could they have not known they were an artist? And yet, many people do not know until they encounter my book. Many artists have never received critical early encouragement. As a result, they may not know they are artists at all. Artists love other artists. Shadow artists are gravitating to their rightful tribe, but cannot yet claim their birthright. I urge them to step forward out of the shadows and into the sunlight of creativity. Most of the time, when we are blocked in an area of our life, it is because we feel safer that way. The toolkit lends practitioners a sense of safety. As they learn to take small risks in their Morning Pages, they are led to larger risks. A step at a time, they emerge as artists. It has been a quarter of a century since the tools were first published. It gives me great satisfaction that the book continues to sell, and sell well. It reinforces my belief that we are all creative and have a hunger for further creativity.

**INTRODUCTION TO THE ARTIST'S WAY** When people ask me what I do, I usually answer, I'm a writer-director and I teach these creativity workshops. The last one interests them. How can you teach creativity? they want to know. Defiance fights with curiosity on their faces. I can't, I tell them. I teach people to let themselves be creative. Oh. You mean we're all creative? Now disbelief and hope battle it out. Yes. You really believe that? Yes. So what do you do? This book is what I do. For a decade now, I have taught a spiritual workshop aimed at freeing people's creativity. I have taught artists and nonartists, painters and filmmakers and homemakers and lawyers anyone interested in living more creatively through practicing an art; even more broadly, anyone interested in practicing the art of creative living. While using, teaching, and sharing tools I have found, devised, divined, and been handed, I have seen blocks dissolved and lives transformed by the simple process of engaging the Great Creator in discovering and recovering our creative powers. The Great Creator? That sounds like some Native American god. That sounds too Christian, too New Age, too... Stupid? Simple-minded? Threatening? ... I know. Think of it as an exercise in open-mindedness. Just think, Okay, Great Creator, whatever that is, and keep reading. Allow yourself to experiment with the idea there might be a Great Creator and you might get some kind of use from it in freeing your own creativity. Because The Artists Way is, in essence, a spiritual path, initiated and practiced through creativity, this book uses the word God. This may be volatile for some of you conjuring old, unworkable, unpleasant, or simply unbelievable ideas about God as you were raised to understand him. Please be open-minded. Remind yourself that to succeed in this course, no god concept is necessary. In fact, many of our commonly held god concepts get in the way. Do not allow semantics to become one more block for you. When the word God is used in these pages, you may substitute the thought good orderly direction or flow. What we are talking about is a creative energy. God is useful shorthand for many of us, but so is Goddess, Mind, Universe, Source, and Higher Power.... The point is not what you name it. The point is that you try using it. For many of us, thinking of it as a form of spiritual electricity has been a very useful jumping-off place. By the simple, scientific approach of experimentation and observation, a workable connection with the flow of good orderly direction can easily be established. It is not the intent of these pages to engage in explaining, debating, or defining that flow. You do not need to understand electricity to use it. Do not call it God unless that is comfortable for you. There seems to be no need to name it unless that name is a useful shorthand for what you experience. Do not pretend to believe when you do not. If you remain forever an atheist, agnostic so be it. You will still be able to experience an altered life through working with these principles. I have worked artist-to-artist with potters, photographers, poets, screenwriters, dancers, novelists, actors, directors and with those who knew only what they dreamed to be or who only dreamed of being somehow more creative. I have seen blocked painters paint, broken poets speak in tongues, halt and lame and maimed writers racing through final drafts. I have come to not only believe but know: No matter what your age or your life path, whether making art is your career or your hobby or your dream, it is not too late or too egotistical or too selfish or too silly to work on your creativity. One fifty-year-old student who always wanted to write used these tools and emerged as a prize-winning playwright. A judge used these tools to fulfill his lifelong dreams

of sculpting. Not all students become full-time artists as a result of the course. In fact, many full-time artists report that they have become more creatively rounded into full-time people. Through my own experience and that of countless others that I have shared I have come to believe that creativity is our true nature, that blocks are an unnatural thwarting of a process at once as normal and as miraculous as the blossoming of a flower at the end of a slender green stem. I have found this process of making spiritual contact to be both simple and straightforward. If you are creatively blocked and I believe all of us are to some extent it is possible, even probable, that you can learn to create more freely through your willing use of the tools this book provides.

Just as doing Hatha Yoga stretches alters consciousness when all you are doing is stretching, doing the exercises in this book alters consciousness when all you are doing is writing and playing. Do these things and a breakthrough will follow whether you believe in it or not. Whether you call it a spiritual awakening or not. In short, the theory doesn't matter as much as the practice itself does. What you are doing is creating pathways in your consciousness through which the creative forces can operate. Once you agree to clearing these pathways, your creativity emerges. In a sense, your creativity is like your blood. Just as blood is a fact of your physical body and nothing you invented, creativity is a fact of your spiritual body and nothing that you must invent. MY OWN JOURNEY I began teaching the creativity workshops in New York. I taught them because I was told to teach them. One minute I was walking in the West Village on a cobblestone street with beautiful afternoon light. The next minute I suddenly knew that I should begin teaching people, groups of people, how to unblock. Maybe it was a wish exhaled on somebody else's walk. Certainly Greenwich Village must contain a greater density of artists blocked and otherwise than nearly any place else in America. I need to unblock, someone may have breathed out. I know how to do it, I may have responded, picking up the cue. My life has always included strong internal directives. Marching orders, I call them. In any case, I suddenly knew that I did know how to unblock people and that I was meant to do so, starting then and there with the lessons I myself had learned. Where did the lessons come from? In 1978, in January, I stopped drinking. I had never thought drinking made me a writer, but now I suddenly thought not drinking might make me stop. In my mind, drinking and writing went together like, well, scotch and soda. For me, the trick was always getting past the fear and onto the page. I was playing beat the clock trying to write before the booze closed in like fog and my window of creativity was blocked again. By the time I was thirty and abruptly sober, I had an office on the Paramount lot and had made a whole career out of that kind of creativity. Creative in spasms. Creative as an act of will and ego. Creative on behalf of others. Creative, yes, but in spurts, like blood from a severed carotid artery. A decade of writing and all I knew was how to make these headlong dashes and hurl myself, against all odds, at the wall of whatever I was writing. If creativity was spiritual in any sense, it was only in its resemblance to a crucifixion. I fell upon the thorns of prose. I bled. If I could have continued writing the old, painful way, I would certainly still be doing it. The week I got sober, I had two national magazine pieces out, a newly minted feature script, and an alcohol problem I could not handle any longer. I told myself that if sobriety meant no creativity I did not want to be sober. Yet I recognized that drinking would kill me and the creativity. I needed to learn to write sober or else give up writing entirely. Necessity, not virtue, was the beginning of my spirituality. I was forced to find a new creative path. And that is where my lessons began. I learned to turn my creativity over to the only god I could believe in, the god of creativity, the life force Dylan Thomas called the force that through the green fuse drives the flower. I learned to get out of the way and let that creative force work through me. I learned to just show up at the page and write down what I heard. Writing became more like eavesdropping and less like inventing a nuclear bomb. It wasn't so tricky, and it didn't blow up on me anymore. I didn't have to be in the mood. I didn't have to take my emotional temperature to see if inspiration was pending. I simply wrote.

No negotiations. Good, bad? None of my business. I wasn't doing it. By resigning as the self-conscious author, I wrote freely. In retrospect, I am astounded I could let go of the drama of being a suffering artist.

Nothing dies harder than a bad idea. And few ideas are worse than the ones we have about art. We can charge so many things off to our suffering-artist identity: drunkenness, promiscuity, fiscal problems, a certain ruthlessness or self-destructiveness in matters of the heart. We all know how broke-crazy-promiscuous-unreliable artists are. And if they don't have to be, then what's my excuse? The idea that I could be sane, sober, and creative terrified me, implying, as it did, the possibility of personal accountability. You mean if I have these gifts, I'm supposed to use them? Yes. Providentially, I was sent another blocked writer to work with and on at this time. I began to teach him what I was learning. (Get out of the way. Let it work through you. Accumulate pages, not judgments.) He, too, began to unblock. Now there were two of us. Soon I had another victim, this one a painter. The tools worked for visual artists, too. This was very exciting to me. In

my grander moments, I imagined I was turning into a creative cartographer, mapping a way out of confusion for myself and for whoever wanted to follow. I never planned to become a teacher. I was only angry I never had a teacher myself. Why did I have to learn what I learned the way I learned it: all by trial and error, all by walking into walls? We artists should be more teachable, I thought. Shortcuts and hazards of the trail could be flagged. These were the thoughts that eddied with me as I took my afternoon walks enjoying the light off the Hudson, plotting what I would write next. Enter the marching orders: I was to teach. Within a week, I was offered a teaching position and space at the New York Feminist Art Institute which I had never heard of. My first class blocked painters, novelists, poets, and filmmakers assembled itself. I began teaching them the lessons that are now in this book. Since that class there have been many others, and many more lessons as well. The Artists Way began as informal class notes mandated by my partner, Mark Bryan. As word of mouth spread, I began mailing out packets of materials. A peripatetic Jungian, John Giannini, spread word of the techniques wherever he lectured seemingly everywhere. Requests for materials always followed. Next, the creation spirituality network got word of the work, and people wrote in from Dubuque, British Columbia, Indiana. Students materialized all over the globe. I am in Switzerland with the State Department. Please send me . . . So I did. The packets expanded and the number of students expanded. Finally, as the result of some very pointed urging from Mark Write it all down. You can help a lot of people. It should be a book I began formally to assemble my thoughts. I wrote and Mark, who was by this time my co-teacher and taskmaster, told me what I had left out. I wrote more and Mark told me what I had still left out. He reminded me that I had seen plenty of miracles to support my theories and urged me to include those, too. I put on the page what I had been putting into practice for a decade. The resulting pages emerged as a blueprint for do-it-yourself recovery. Like mouth-to-mouth resuscitation or the Heimlich maneuver, the tools in this book are intended as life-savers. Please use them and pass them on. Many times, I've heard words to this effect: Before I took your class, I was completely separate from my creativity. The years of bitterness and loss had taken their toll. Then, gradually, the miracle started to happen. I have gone back to school to get my degree in theater, I'm auditioning for the first time in years, I'm writing on a steady basis and, most important of all, I finally feel comfortable calling myself an artist. I doubt I can convey to you the feeling of the miraculous that I experience as a teacher, witnessing the before and after in the lives of students. Over the duration of the course, the sheer physical transformation can be startling, making me realize that the term enlightenment is a literal one. Students' faces often take on a glow as they contact their creative energies. The same charged spiritual atmosphere that fills a great work of art can fill a creativity class. In a sense, as we are creative beings, our lives become our work of art.

INTRODUCTION TO THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ARTISTS WAY ART IS A SPIRITUAL transaction. Artists are visionaries. We routinely practice a form of faith, seeing clearly and moving toward a creative goal that shimmers in the distance often visible to us, but invisible to those around us. Difficult as it is to remember, it is our work that creates the market, not the market that creates our work. Art is an act of faith, and we practice practicing it. Sometimes we are called on pilgrimages on its behalf and, like many pilgrims, we doubt the call even as we answer it. But answer we do. I am writing on a black lacquer Chinese desk that looks west across the Hudson River to America. I am on the far western shore of Manhattan, which is a country unto itself, and the one I am living in right now, working to cantilever musicals from page to stage. Manhattan is where the singers are. Not to mention Broadway. I am here because art brought me here. Obedient, I came. Per capita, Manhattan may have a higher density of artists than anywhere else in America. In my Upper West Side neighborhood, cellos are as frequent and as ungainly as cows in Iowa. They are part of the landscape here. Writing at a typewriter, looking out across the lights, I too am something Manhattan knows very well. I write melody on a piano ten blocks from where Richard Rodgers, a gangly adolescent, climbed a short stoop to meet a short boy who became his longtime partner, Larry Hart. Together they dreamed through drought and flood. My apartment is on Riverside Drive. At this narrow end of the island, Broadway is a scant block behind my back as I face west across the river, inky black now as the sun sets in colored ribbons above it. It is a wide river, not only dark, and on a windy day and there are many the water is choppy and white-capped. Cherry-red tugboats, as determined as beetles, push their prows into the waves, digging their way up and down the river, pushing long barges with their snouts. Manhattan is a seaport and a landing for dreams. Manhattan teems with dreamers. All artists dream, and we arrive here carrying those dreams. Not all of us are dressed in black, still smoking cigarettes and drinking hard liquor, still living out the tawdry romance of hard knocks in tiny walk-up flats filled with hope and roaches in neighborhoods so bad that the rats have moved on. No, just like the roaches, the artists are everywhere here, tenements to

penthousesmy own building has not only me with my piano and typewriter but also an opera singer who trills in the inner canyons like a lark ascending. The neighborhood waiters are oftennot alwaysactors, and the particularly pretty duck-footed neighborhood girls do dance, although you wouldnt imagine their grace from their web-footed walks.I drank a cup of tea at Edgars Cafe this afternoon, the cafe named for Edgar Allan Poe, who lived down here and died farther uptown, all the way in the Bronx. Ive looked up into Leonard Bernsteins ground-floor windows at the Dakota, and gone a little numb each time I pass the arched entryway where John Lennon was shot. In this apartment, I am a scant block from Duke Ellingtons haunts, and theres a street named after him too. Manhattan is a town full of ghosts. Creative powerand powerscourse through its vertical canyons.It was in Manhattan that I first began teaching the Artists Way. Like all artistslike all of us if we listenI experience inspiration. I was called to teach and I answered that call somewhat grudgingly. What about my art? I wondered. I had not yet learned that we do tend to practice what we preach, that in unblocking others I would unblock myself, and that, like all artists, I would thrive more easily with some companionship, with kindred souls making kindred leaps of faith. Called to teach, I could not imagine the good teaching would bring to me and, through me, to others.In 1978 I began teaching artists how to unblock and get back on their feet after a creative injury. I shared with them the tools I had learned through my own creative practice. I kept it all as easy and gentle as I could.Remember, there is a creative energy that wants to express itself through you; Dont judge the work or yourself. You can sort it out later; Let God work through you, I told them.My tools were simple and my students were few. Both tools and number of students grew steadily and hugely for the next ten years. At the beginning and, for the most part, always, my students were chiefly blocked or injured artistspainters, poets, potters, writers, filmmakers, actors, and those who simply wished to be anything more creative in their personal lives or in any of the arts. I kept things simple because they really were. Creativity is like crabgrassit springs back with the simplest bit of care. I taught people how to bring their creative spirit the simple nutrients and nurturance they needed to keep it fed. People responded by making books, films, paintings, photographs, and much, much more. Word of mouth spread and my classes were easy to fill.In the meanwhile, I kept making my own art. I wrote plays. I wrote novels and movies. I did feature films, TV, and short stories. I wrote poetry, then performance art. From doing this work, I learned more creative tools, wrote more teaching essays, and, at the urging of my friend Mark Bryan, I got the essays assembled into teaching notes and then into a proper book.Mark and I stood elbow to elbow, printing and assembling the simple book that I could send out to people needing help. We mailed it in this form to perhaps a thousand people, who in turn photocopied and passed it on to their friends. We began to hear amazing stories of recovery: painters painting, actors acting, directors directing, and people with no declared art who began doing the art form they had always wished to do. We heard tales of sudden breakthroughs and slow awakenings.Jeremy P Tarcher, the noted creativity and human potential publisher, read an early draft of the work and decided to publish it. Meanwhile, I divided the book into a twelve-week course, each section dealing with some specific issue. This simple book was the distillate of twelve years of teaching and twenty years of making art in many forms. At first I called it Healing the Artist Within. Finally, after much thought, I decided to call it The Artists Way. It explained and explored creativity as a spiritual issue. I began to witness my own miracles.I often traveled to teach, and at book signings and public venues people began to hand me CDs, books, videos, and letters conveying this thought: I used your tools and made this, thank you so much. My most frequent compliment was, Your book changed my life, and I heard it from artists of little fame and great fame, in backwaters and on the international frontlines. Using the tools, painters went from being blocked to winning large, juried exhibitions. Writers went from not writing to winning Emmy and Grammy awards for their work. I found myself humbled by the power of God, the Great Creator, to restore strength, vitality, and inspiration to individual creative paths, diverse and divergent. One woman, a blocked writer in her mid-fifties, became an award-winning playwright. A longtime sideman conceived and executed a bravura solo album. Long-harbored dreams bloomed everywhere the Great Creator turned a gardening hand. I received thank yous that properly belonged to God. I was a spiritual conduit for the central spiritual fact that the Great Creator loved other artists and actively helped those who opened themselves to their creativity.Artist to artist, hand to hand, The Artists Way began to spread. I heard about groups in the Panama jungle, in the outback, and at that other heart of darkness, The New York Times. Druid groups, Sufi groups, and Buddhist groups all found common ground in its simple creative precepts. The Artists Way reached the Internet, forming groups or, as I call them, clusters that were like large melon patches sending feeders and tendrils out to form now a group in England, now in Germany, now a Swiss Jungian contingent. Like life itself, The Artists Way, which began to be called a movement, did indeed move

onward tenaciously, and even voraciously. Artists helping other artists proliferated. Works of art blossomed and careers took off and steadied, surrounded by supportive friends. I was a willing witness. A hundred thousand people bought and used the book. Then two hundred, then a million, then more. We heard of, and occasionally helped initiate, The Artists Ways use in hospitals, prisons, universities, human-potential centers, and often among therapists, doctors, AIDS groups, and battered women's programs, not to mention fine-arts studios, theological programs, and music conservatories, and, of course, always passed hand to hand, mouth to mouth, heart to heart, artist to artist, as a form of first aid and gentle resuscitation. Like a miraculous garden, The Artists Way continued to grow, grow, and grow. It is still growing. Just this morning I received in the mail a newly published book and a thank-you. To date, The Artists Way appears in nearly twenty languages and has been taught or recommended everywhere from The New York Times to the Smithsonian, from Esalen to elite music studios at Juilliard. Like AA, Artists Way clusters have often gathered in church basements and healing centers, as well as in a thatched hut in Central America, and in a python-surrounded shack in Australia. Did I mention that many therapists run facilitated groups? They do. People heal because creativity is healthy and practicing it, they find their greater selves. And we are all greater than we can conceive. I wanted The Artists Way to be free and, like the twelve-step movement, largely leaderless and self-taught, growing through simplicity and lack of control, performing its expansion through an easy-does-it series of natural, call it seasonal, self-evolving checks and balances. It will guard and guide and fix itself from abuses, ran my approach. As we passed the million mark, I feared for the necessary time and privacy to make my own art without which personal experience I could not continue to help others. How could I write a teaching book if I had no fresh insights as to what to teach? Inch by inch, I retreated to the solitude of my personal creative laboratory the still, quiet place within myself where I could make art and learn from the making of it. Every piece of art I made taught me what to teach. Every year I worked taught me that creativity was open-ended. There was no upper limit, although some growth was slow. Faith was the required ingredient. I began to write dispatches, short, pointed books aimed at disarming the real and present dangers of trying to make a sane and gentle creative life. I wrote *The Right to Write*, *Supplies*, and other, more homely and gentle guides such as *The Artists Date Book*, *The Artists Way Morning Pages Journal*, and my prayer books aimed at creating a sense of safety and well-being for those who tread the creative path in this world. I wished for people good cheer and good companions. Although art was a spiritual path, it could best be trod with fellow pilgrims. People listened. Meanwhile, Artists Way books were mandatory on certain tour buses in the music scene, included as savvy set decor on films, mailed off to and from grandmothers blooming brightly in their sturdy dotage, and served as a bridge for many successful artists to change creative habitats and genres. As for myself, a novel, a short-story collection, and three plays found firm footing amid my publishing seventeen books and continuing, carefully, to both make art and teach. My students won prizes, and so did I. *Utne Reader* chose *The Artists Way* as a masterpiece, the poetry album I made with Tim Wheeler was selected for best original score, and my teaching books continued to appear on bestseller and editors choice lists throughout America and the world. Is it any wonder I often felt dazed and confused, overwhelmed by the velocity of people and events? It is one of the ironies of a celebrated writer's life that our natural inclination to sit alone behind a desk becomes more and more difficult to pursue. My own morning pages were an invaluable, continuing source of guidance. I was told both to seek solitude and to reach for the companionship of other artists who believed, as I did, that we were always led both by the Great Creator and by those who have gone before us, treading their Artists Way and loving the same art forms we do. Higher powers stand ready to help us if we ask. We must remain ready to ask, open-minded enough to be led, and willing to believe despite our bouts of disbelief. Creativity is an act of faith, and we must be faithful to that faith, willing to share it to help others, and to be helped in return. Outside my window, out over the Hudson, a very large bird is soaring. I have seen this bird for days now, sailing, sailing on the fierce winds that are the slipstream around this island. It is too large to be a hawk. It is not shaped like a gull. The Hudson Valley is full of eagles, higher up. I cannot believe this is one, but it seems to know exactly what it is: eagle. It doesn't tell its name. It wears it. Maybe, as artists, we are such birds, mistaken by ourselves and others for something else, riding the current of our dreams, hunting in the canyons of commerce for something we have seen from higher up. For artists, a wing and a prayer is routine operating procedure. We must trust our process, look beyond results. Artists throughout the centuries have spoken of inspiration, confiding that God spoke to them or angels did. In our age, such notions of art as a spiritual experience are seldom mentioned. And yet, the central experience of creativity is mystical. Opening our souls to what must be made, we meet our Maker. Artists toil in cells all over Manhattan. We have a monks

devotion to our work and, like monks, some of us will be visited by visions and others will toil out our days knowing glory only at a distance, kneeling in the chapel but never receiving the visitation of a Tony, an Oscar, a National Book Award. And yet the still, small voice may speak as loud in us as in any. So we pray. Fame will come to some. Honor will visit all who work. As artists, we experience the fact that God is in the details. Making our art, we make artful lives. Making our art, we meet firsthand the hand of our Creator.