

The Gift of Expanded Boundaries

Jane English, 2021

I'm finally going to talk about things I have been somewhat afraid to express for almost eighty years.

What follows is my own story, not necessarily that of other people also born non-labor cesarean. Though over the years as I spoke with such people, much of what I say resonates with their own experiences. I encourage those who need scientific proof of what I say to go ahead and do the research. In fact, on my Cesarean Voices website cesareanvoices.com I have posted a list of [interesting research questions](#).

Being born cesarean without labor—non-labor cesarean—I do indeed have a different sense of boundaries, ones about which I have been in denial out of fear of being thought “intrusive” or “weird” or “egotistical”—thinking too highly of myself and taking up too much space. Who am I to think I am different, even to be what people call “psychic?” Maybe I am making all this up, being egotistical and arrogant.

In retrospect I see that I have tried for years to limit myself to what are conventionally accepted personal boundaries. I think these boundaries are learned in the journey down the birth canal, both through physical pressure and through labor hormones. This is a journey I did not experience in my own non-labor cesarean birth. For more on labor hormones and forgetting, see the book, *The Human Odyssey: Navigating the Twelve Stages of Life* by Thomas Armstrong, Ph.D.

It is time for me to release the fear of being criticized for “imagining things” and for being intrusive. It is time also to release the anger I have felt at being constantly jammed into too small a container.

And it is time for me to accept these different boundaries as a gift (perhaps a birth-day gift?) and to use this gift to serve in our confused world—to serve better and more consciously, than I have with my acclaimed photographic work. What shape will this service take? I have no idea. Writing this is the first step toward that service.

In roughly chronological order, here are experiences I have had that support this understanding of having different psychological/personal boundaries:

- My mother told me that I was very “shy” as a child, not liking to be around a lot of people. I think I was overwhelmed by all that I felt of these other people’s thoughts and emotions and sensations.

- As a young child I felt most at home out in the fields and woods behind our house. I could let myself expand and be all that I really was. This led into my many years of nature photography. My camera gave me an excuse to poke around in nature as I had as a child, and the beautiful images I made were my way of sharing with other people the expansiveness I felt in nature. Some of my photos have a tiny human figure in them—perhaps a way of letting other people know what I felt like being out in nature.

- When I was in junior high school in Topsfield, Massachusetts in the mid-1950’s we all attended ballroom dancing classes, held upstairs in the auditorium of the old Town Hall, a room that was also used as an under-sized basketball court for the high school. At one point the dance teacher said she was going to give a small prize to the couple who, when the music stopped, was nearest to a spot on the floor that she had chosen. I immediately steered my partner to a spot that I “knew” was the chosen spot, a place where two of the black-painted basketball lines intersected. And I was correct. We got the prize.

- Having studied physics from 1960 to 1970, all the way to a PhD, I was thoroughly indoctrinated with the worldview that the physical world is made up of fundamentally separate objects that are “out there.” But hidden within the physics I studied was an “escape hatch,” a back door through which I could escape this limited world of separation. The escape hatch was the wave-particle paradox in quantum physics, a paradox that resolved itself for me in 1976 in a transcendent experience where light was not an object that was either wave or particle, and there was no subject (me) seeing light. Neither subject nor object was real. There was just consciousness and the understanding that the ways this seamless unity is divided are conventions, temporary divisions. See details of this experience in the chapter entitled “Science and Transformation” in my 1999 book, *Fingers Pointing to the Moon*.

- About 1977, while I lived in Mendocino, California, a couple who had somehow learned about my work and writings about being born cesarean came to visit me in the cabin where I was house-sitting. The man was also born non-labor cesarean. As we sat together on floor cushions and talked, at one point the woman asked me, “Do you always probe people’s minds like that?” I told her I did not know what she meant, as I was just being who I always was. She also commented that she’d never

seen anyone “handle” her partner the way I did. Apparently she was impressed by the way I talked with him, standing my own ground and not letting his “energy” and his own expanded boundaries, overcome my own.

- About 1980, I was in a workshop somewhere in Marin County, California led by Angeles Arrien, daughter of a Basque shaman. She led us in an exercise in which two of us walked toward each other until we felt the distance at which we were entering the other person’s personal space. For most people this distance was about one to three feet from the other person. But with me, people walked right up to me, even bumping into me. Angeles said this was because my personal boundaries were huge, encompassing at least the whole room. So everyone was already in my personal space.

- While I was studying with the Greenlandic shaman, Angaangaq, between 2008 and 2012, he mentioned several times that my “energy” was different because of the way I was born. Later another indigenous friend of mine told me that Angaangaq had told him that, “Jane takes on other people’s energies too much.” Again, implying a lack of the “usual” personal boundaries.

- In more detail, here is what I experienced in the mid-1980’s when I attended a workshop at Esalen Institute in Big Sur, CA, led by parapsychology researcher Stanley Krippner and psychic Shakti Gawain.

One of the exercises they led us in involved dividing the group of about 18 people in half. One half was to be the senders and the other half the receivers. The receivers walked down to the big hot tubs fed by hot springs.

The senders stayed in the meeting room and by the roll of dice chose one of six numbered envelopes that had been prepared by an associate of Stanley’s. Each envelope contained a postcard of artwork. Stanley had no idea what was in the envelopes. The sender group, led by Shakti, was at an agreed on time to concentrate on the image on the chosen postcard and “send” it to the group of receivers in the hot springs tubs.

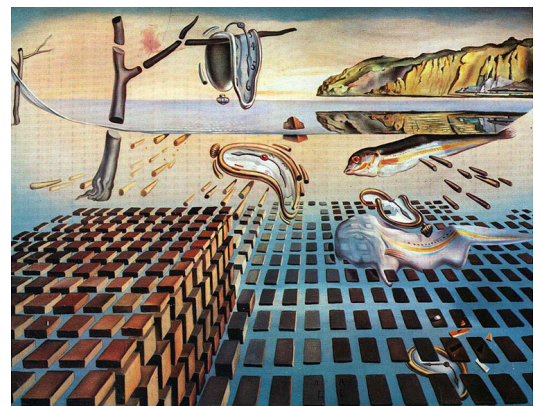
I was in the receiver group with Stanley. We went to the tubs, got in, and relaxed in the warm, almost hot, water. Stanley was watching the time and at the appointed moment we became silent and focused within, paying attention to what images came to us. By agreement the sender group “sent” and the receivers “received” at two or three different times.

What I saw was first something cross-hatched—maybe like a tennis racquet or a beaver tail. Then I saw a tiled

floor with large black tiles and white tiles in a checkerboard pattern, narrowing in perspective into the distance where there was bright light above the horizon. There may have been sandy hills rising from either side of the tile floor. I also saw an image of a sunflower, from the side, embroidered with rust/yellow yarn on royal blue burlap.

After our time in the tub, we dried off, dressed and walked back up toward the meeting room. We waited outside the door and were admitted one at a time. By then all six of the envelopes had been opened and all six postcards were taped to the wall spaced a couple of feet apart in a row.

We were told to say nothing, just to walk to the card we thought had been sent and to point at it. I chose a card of a painting, similar to the one by Salvador Dail shown below, that had a checkerboard pattern in perspective, with bright light above the distant horizon. I was told I was right. Then I said, “But where is the embroidered sunflower?” Shakti held up her purse—tan burlap with a face-on sunflower embroidered in yellow/rust yarn—and said, “The card was leaning against this.” I responded, “But it is the wrong color. The burlap was blue.” She then pointed to a blue pillow and said, “The purse sat on that pillow.”



The Disintegration of the Persistence of Memory, 1954

Clearly I had received what was being sent both consciously with the postcard and unconsciously with the pillow and purse. Perhaps I saw the sunflower as viewed from the side because the postcard obscured half the embroidered flower.

A carefully controlled experiment like this left me with no doubt about the reality of “psychic” communication, communication that goes beyond the boundaries of the usual five senses. I could no longer deny the reality of the mystery.

It occurs to me that the treasure at the center of these experiences is a breakdown of the conventional sense of separateness, including that of personal identity. When we no longer experience the world as “things” that are “out there” we begin to live in harmony with all of life, even with Earth herself, rather than considering “animals, vegetables, and minerals” to be “resources” we humans can exploit. Instead we participate in a living wonder.

This is what I had hints of when I wandered in the woods as a child, when the quantum wave-particle paradox dissolved for me back in 1976, and in the other experiences listed above.

Yet identity and separateness are also of value. They are essential in our universe of space and time. What is needed is a delightful and dynamic balance, an interplay of naming, of identity, with something that is beyond naming but might be called unity.

I think of the first chapter of Chinese wisdom classic *Tao Te Ching*, [an edition of which](#) I worked on with my late Chinese husband Gia-fu Feng in the 1970's, and from which, with my nature photographs, I have created wall [calendars](#) for over thirty years.

The Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao.

The name that can be named is not the eternal name.

The nameless is the beginning of heaven and earth.

The named is the mother of ten thousand things.

Ever desireless, one can see the mystery.

Ever desiring, one can see the manifestations.

These two spring from the same source but differ in name;

This appears as darkness.

Darkness within darkness.

The gate to all mystery.

We all can be aware of this interplay of identity and unity in our living. Perhaps it is just that as a non-labor cesarean born person I have slightly easier access to the unity end of that spectrum, having not forgotten the prenatal oneness, that Stan Grof speaks of, as thoughly as do people who experience the hormones of labor and the constriction of the birth canal. Perhaps we who are non-labor cesarean born can be among those who help to restore balance in a world that has swung way too far toward identity and separateness.

This “native” ability to be in the unity end of the spectrum does not make us better than anyone else, just different. I have much gratitude for the lessons about identity given me over the years by people who did experience the hormones and the birth canal—people who have “labored” with me, “given birth” to me. While at times these lessons were given unconsciously or in moments of conflict, I now appreciate them all.

Thank you.