

**THE FLASH OF INSIGHT:
A TOOL FOR CREATIVE THINKING**

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The theory of semiotics imparts a dynamic view of the relationship of thought, language and culture in the construction of meaning. This process takes place not only across an individual's life span but also in the evolution of society and over the course of history. As previously discussed, interchange, a process of inquiry, interaction and dialogue, is the primary mechanism for this continuous, ubiquitous meaning-making process that constitutes human experience. To assist with interchange, communicative literacy, using standard symbolic systems to communicate ideas, allows meaning to distribute in the larger community. In this complex process, meaning may cause views to shift slowly and steadily in an orderly fashion, or in extreme cases, may create sudden changes in understanding that shatter pre-existing ideas and beliefs. In Peirce's theory, the fundamental agency of "firstness," or abductive reasoning is the starting point for the emergence of meaning. For education purposes, we shall refer to this stage in the meaning-making process as "creative insight."

Bohm (1996, 1998), a theoretical physicist and philosopher committed to the use of group dialogue for addressing social problems, was intrigued by the relationship of creativity and scientific discovery. Similar to Peirce and Eco, Bohm also describes insight as fresh, new and original thought that is powerful and significant. Insight arises as a mental image. In fact, the word theory and theatre, derive from the same Greek word, *theoria*, "to view or to make a spectacle" (Bohm. p. 43).

Bohm distinguishes creative insight, regarded as the art of original thinking from reflective thought, controlled by memory and previous learning. According to Bohm, creative insight, “the essential quality of intelligence” (p. 55), arises at a critical juncture such as that preceding a major breakthrough. Rather than the result of immediate experience or deductive reasoning, the mind itself perceives a wholeness or unity in the moment of insight that allows” the discovery of something new that had previously been *unknown*” (p. 2). For example, an image of the moon falling created the flash of understanding leading to Sir Isaac Newton’s discovery of the law of gravity. Thus art and science intertwine in creative insight and the pursuit of meaning.

More than a mere visualization, insight contains implicit, enfolded content that has the potential to unfold, revealing new ways of seeing the world. However newness alone does not constitute insight. For there to be true insight, one must grasp something of significance: “From this apprehension, the mind can go on to think and to reason out more and more of the consequences implied by the new insight.” Thus an initial creative insight begins the movement of thought, activating the emotional, biological, intellectual and perceptual processes involved in learning. Thus through creative insight, art and science intertwine presenting “unending possibilities for new discoveries, approaching no visible limit or end” (p. 68).

Consistent with Bohm's view on the role of insight, Eco regards the "metaphor as a tool of cognition, a means for actualizing the flash of insight.

Bohm, D. (1996). *On dialogue*. London: Routledge.