

Embodied Inner Work: An Educator's Journey of Body-Mind-Heart Integration

by

Sean Roswell Park

M.A., University of Toronto, 2007

B.H.Sc., McMaster University, 2004

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the

Arts Education Program

Faculty of Education

© **Sean Roswell Park 2014**

Simon Fraser University

Summer 2014

All rights reserved.

However, in accordance with the *Copyright Act of Canada*, this work may be reproduced, without authorization, under the conditions for "Fair Dealing." Therefore, limited reproduction of this work for the purposes of private study, research, criticism, review and news reporting is likely to be in accordance with the law, particularly if cited appropriately.

Approval

Name: Sean Roswell Park
Degree: Doctor of Philosophy
Title: *Embodied Inner Work: An Educator's Journey of Body-Mind-Heart Integration*
Examining Committee: **Chair:** Lynn Fels
Associate Professor

Heesoon Bai
Senior Supervisor
Professor

Celeste Snowber
Supervisor
Associate Professor

Avraham Cohen
Supervisor
Professor
City University of Seattle
(Vancouver)

Stephen Smith
Internal Examiner
Associate Professor
Faculty of Education

William L. Greene
External Examiner
Professor
School of Education
Southern Oregon University

Date May 2, 2014

Defended/Approved: _____

Partial Copyright Licence



The author, whose copyright is declared on the title page of this work, has granted to Simon Fraser University the non-exclusive, royalty-free right to include a digital copy of this thesis, project or extended essay[s] and associated supplemental files ("Work") (title[s] below) in Summit, the Institutional Research Repository at SFU. SFU may also make copies of the Work for purposes of a scholarly or research nature; for users of the SFU Library; or in response to a request from another library, or educational institution, on SFU's own behalf or for one of its users. Distribution may be in any form.

The author has further agreed that SFU may keep more than one copy of the Work for purposes of back-up and security; and that SFU may, without changing the content, translate, if technically possible, the Work to any medium or format for the purpose of preserving the Work and facilitating the exercise of SFU's rights under this licence.

It is understood that copying, publication, or public performance of the Work for commercial purposes shall not be allowed without the author's written permission.

While granting the above uses to SFU, the author retains copyright ownership and moral rights in the Work, and may deal with the copyright in the Work in any way consistent with the terms of this licence, including the right to change the Work for subsequent purposes, including editing and publishing the Work in whole or in part, and licensing the content to other parties as the author may desire.

The author represents and warrants that he/she has the right to grant the rights contained in this licence and that the Work does not, to the best of the author's knowledge, infringe upon anyone's copyright. The author has obtained written copyright permission, where required, for the use of any third-party copyrighted material contained in the Work. The author represents and warrants that the Work is his/her own original work and that he/she has not previously assigned or relinquished the rights conferred in this licence.

Simon Fraser University Library
Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada

revised Fall 2013

Abstract

This dissertation is a heuristic, contemplative and artistic inquiry into the existential core of the author as human and as educator. The author, in examining his dreams and his past, discovers symbols and experiences that call him to know his suffering, restore access to his existential core, and be more fully present as an educator. In surveying the state of contemporary education and his experience growing up, a number of problematic schisms dividing mind, heart and body are identified as obstacles to our deepest potential as human beings. A rationale and various illustrations of embodied inner work that draw from Eastern philosophy and practice as well as Western psychology are put forth as valuable for the educator interested in accessing their deepest potential for ethical action in the classroom. Over the course of an apprenticeship with a *neigong* and *taijiquan* teacher, membership in a contemplative inquiry group, and in following the detours and contours of daily life, the case is made that any artistic practice can become a total way of being that engages the existential core. The concept and practice of various *embodied inner work* practices and skills are offered as a framework for the integration of mind and body, conflict transformation, and I-Thou encounters in the classroom. The author concludes with reflections on classrooms as sacred and empty spaces, the challenges of contemporary life, and the dramatic changes that come with being a new father.

Keywords: contemplative education; holistic education; heuristic inquiry; arts-based inquiry; embodied inquiry;

Dedication

For my ancestors, for my family close and far, and for the big love that breathes life and movement into our bones.

Acknowledgements

In following my bliss, I have been blessed to have a whole community witness and support me through my transformation.

For my dad I extend an unending gratitude for being a source of strength, silliness, and inspiration in my life. I bow deeply to my mom for showing me how to take care of my inner child and teaching me about acceptance and perseverance. To both of you, I thank you for bringing me into this world alive and kicking!

Many teachers, peers, and friends also deserve a solid shout out. Jeff Brown, Martin Stock, Emily Sadowski, Dr. Tom Culham, Dr. Charles Scott, Dr. Richard Sztramko, Lucy Leu, Maili Dinim, Anton Smessaeart, Lenke Sifko, Kyira Korrigan, caroline lefebvre, Carrie Macleod, Sarah Chase, Agent Humble, Adrian Sinclair, David Hatfield, Karen Fiorini, Michael Rosen, Rob Baxter, Karen Ageson, Dr. Michael Chang, Naomi Steinberg, Stu Clark, Dr. Bob Henderson, Jordan Bower, Dr. Barb Bloemhof, Dr. Gregory Kramer, Dr. Lynn Fels, Dr. Vicki Kelly, Dr. John Portelli Dr. Devon Christie, Dr. Michael Chang, Dr. Del Harnish, Chela Davison, Dr. David Abram, Dave Gould, Dr. Daniela Elza, Dr. Lee Freedman, Dr. Geoff Soloway, Joel Brass, Kerri Messner, Anna Kemble, Laura Piersol, Shekufeh Zonji, Nico Dicecco, Diane Garceau, Dr. Olen Gunnlaugson, Dr. Conrad Sichler, Laura Arsenault, Dr. Paul Uy, Sharon Wherland, Jake Wadland, Itay Keshet, Ann Russell, Dr. Ashwani Kumar, Lena Soots, and many others have all shared some of their wisdom and support for me in ways that have contributed to the substance and vision for this work. Major props go to Erica Smouter, Julia Lane, Shahar Rabi, and Saskia Tait for being relentless supporters of my process, for dreaming and visioning the bigger possibilities for our work, and for the irreplaceable heart-to-heart connections.

Thanks go to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council for acknowledging the importance of the ideas and questions I'm pursuing and granting me a fellowship in my final year, even if it did take me four attempts to convince them.

To Dr. Celeste Snowber, a supervisor on my committee, I offer gestures of ecstasy, abandon, and grace. Celeste has helped me connect my movements and my

body to my soul, a path along which the beauty and pain and the sacred and the profane have a home. She has encouraged me to see the artist within and to embrace the detours and contours of my life as my practice.

Sifu Lou Crockett is a rare jewel whose commitment to a vigorous and unending embodied inner work is unparalleled. His dedication to my development as a student of *neigong*, even when I was flat broke, inspires me to practice with exceptional mindfulness and playful curiosity. Lou exemplifies the integration of spiritual practice with the movements of our body in our everyday life. I bow deeply to Lou and look forward to where our studies take us.

My wife, Stephanie, danced and hoola-hooped her way into my life during a difficult period near the start of my doctoral program. As I began awakening to the callings of my heart I found a being with whom I could share and create an exceptional life. Her dedication to me, our relationship, herself, her work, and others has helped me put into practice the question of what it means to live life from the heart. Stephanie is a wonderfully embodied inner worker and creative collaborator and I am so grateful for her wisdom and her dedication to seeing me as I am. Woohoo!

Dr. Avraham Cohen, a supervisor on my committee, is a beautiful human being who evokes care, warmth, playfulness, and a fierce dedication to living the most fulfilling inner life through his presence and mentorship. Avi saw my passion for aligning myself with the Dao through contemplative practice and internal martial arts and supported its emergence in a way no one has been able to. During some dark and troubled times, he reflected back to me many questions and suggestions that helped me in critical ways to tap into my imagination and inner resources. To Avi I give a big hug and sneak tickle attack!

Dr. Heesoon Bai, my primary supervisor, is a true force of nature. Her sword is exceptionally quick and makes thorough, loving, and precise work of anything it touches. As an academic, she has paved a way for many of us who are dedicated to the inner life and transforming suffering into joy and freedom as educational, scholarly, and political projects. Without Heesoon I would have no holding environment or safe homebase in the academy. Heesoon has welcomed me into her home on countless occasions, always

with hot soup, pistachios, and coconut oolong tea. Over food and overlooking the city, we have meditated together, cried together, laughed together, and engaged in some of the most stimulating conversations I have ever had. I am so blessed to have a mentor who is also an amazing friend and truly a member of my family. Heesoon was also the person who introduced me to Lou Crockett and supported my study with him. Heesoon and I have spent many hours in *neigong* training together and I am so happy that we found a way to make research invigorating, restorative, and a means of keeping us in touch with mystery.

Finally, I am thrilled about my baby Theo's arrival into this world. I look forward to supporting you in finding your ground, path and voice in the world. Let's dance baby!

Table of Contents

Approval	ii
Partial Copyright Licence	iii
Abstract	iv
Dedication	v
Acknowledgements	vi
Table of Contents	ix
List of Figures	xi
Prelude	1
Some convictions on the aims of education	1
Walking a path of integration	1
10,000 ways of being	5
E/dao/cation	6
Inner work as heuristic research	9
Dojo inquiry	13
Notes to the reader	14
Chapter 1 – The Heart Calls	16
Associations and potential meanings	17
Family life, memory, suffering, and vulnerability	21
Survival strategies as resources: An early memory	23
Suffering	27
The journey to Vancouver: Detour into vulnerability	30
Waking up	34
Chapter 2 – Affliction and Being	37
Five assumptions	37
The broader ecology of suffering	40
Norms and the wound of the unloved	41
The norms of formal education and their consequences	42
Getting to the roots of normalization	46
The power and fear of feeling	46
Rationality versus intuition	47
Commodification of education	48
Psychological distress	49
Objectification	50
Having and being	50
Chapter 3 – The Lived Curriculum	52
Curriculum theory	55
Currere and living pedagogy: Towards an embodied curriculum	56
Inter/Embodiment	58
Elements of an embodied curriculum	62
Vitality	64
Vitality blocks and creativity	65
My contribution	69
Chapter 4 – The Wounded Educator	71
Inner Work	73
Authenticity	75
Soul and the Original Face	77

Why does authenticity matter in education?	78
Doing Inner Work	79
Into the Dojo	83
Chapter 5 - Training	84
Cultivating Mind-Body Unity: Martial Arts as Way	84
Budō	85
Kokoro and Yuasa's Cultivated Mind-Body Unity	87
Attitude Toward Practice	89
Culture and Modern Education	91
My Training	93
Neigong and the Taijiquan Body	95
Going Internal	100
Harmonization	102
Heart/Mind leads Intention	106
Intention leads Energy	106
Energy Leads Strength	108
Standing Gong Practice (Zhan-Zhuang)	112
Silk Reeling and Push-Hands (Tui Shou)	116
Onion Inquiry	118
Chapter 6 - Teaching and Learning in the Dao-Field: MetaSkills	121
Stances, Postures and Dispositions in Teaching	121
The Dreambody	123
Metaskills and Deep Democracy	128
Dreaming with the Body	130
The Dream	130
The Conference	131
Move with . . . trust emergence	135
Containing: Grounding, Centring and Boundaries	136
Dance with Timespirits	139
Systematic Thinking	140
Feed My Demons	142
Engage the Hidden Ki	146
Play: Sean in the Park	148
Chapter 7: Inner Work and Education	151
Metaphoric Sensibilities	151
Images of Empty Space and Yin-Yang	153
Working with Yin and Yang	155
Curriculum as Way, Curriculum as Relationship	160
Meaning-Making and Meaning-Unmaking	164
Fatherhood: Death and Re-birth	165
References	171
Appendix. Standing Gongs	185

List of Figures

Figure 1: Heartbox and Inner Knife	17
Figure 2: San Ti (Three Body) Posture	106
Figure 3: 'The Body Becomes All Eyes'	114
Figure 4: Standing Gong Posture	124
Figure 5: Dreambody	141
Figure 6: Crow	158
Figure 7: Yin-Yang	165

Prelude

Before I launch into the thicket of my project here, I want to offer a prelude that prepares you, the reader, for what is to come. As will be evident as you read ahead, this research project is very different from the kind of academic research you might expect to be reading. The first section below is a kind of credo that discloses some of my deeply held beliefs about the aims of education. These beliefs arise from my own transformation and from witnessing what is possible in educational environments, and in many respects, arise out of a philosophy that centralizes the inner life of any educator or student. The way in which I practice, question, and articulate such a philosophy will become clearer throughout the work, and the second section of this prelude offers some orientation to my methodology. As the focus of my research is on the human experience of the educator, taking myself as an example, some orientation to this kind of exploration and the broader implications for education is required. By and large, academic research does not attend to subjectivity and lived experience, as it is a shifting terrain that does not always yield well to control and predictability. Life is a complex, emerging process and there are parts of our selves that work in the shadows, hidden from direct view. There are risks to attending to these hidden parts because there are quite often uncomfortable and painful wounds in need of care. As well, there is the danger of being caught in a self-referential, insular box of inquiry that fails to recognize the ways in which our selves are intertwined with others, culture, and society. However, this does not mean that the inner life cannot be examined and worked with, as the various methodologies, practices, and philosophies I immerse myself in are well-suited for my questions. My short answer to why personal inner work matters in education is that educators who are aware of their personal wounding, the potential limitations that their inner world blind spots create, and who have developed and are developing skills to work with these limitations are better able to access their own creative potential and create relationships with students that promote individual growth and community development.

Some convictions on the aims of education

Walking a path of integration

The aim of education, as I see it, should ultimately be concerned with helping people become more wholly integrated. Integration is about how we embrace the dynamic play of opposites that animate our human existence: life and death, stillness and movement, inner and outer, hardness and softness, self and other, ecstatic bliss and deep pain. To see, experience, and abide in the push and pull of these polarities in our lives is to be on a path of being more at peace with ourselves and feeling at home in the world. Integration also refers to living with a deep appreciation of our mutual interdependence and connectivity with others and nature. There is an acknowledgement that who we are as individuals is shaped by our parents, our society, and the ecology of relations to our planet.

We are multi-dimensional beings and there is always more to us than what lies on the surface. Handy (2000), for example, uses the concept of the Johari House with four rooms (based of the Johari window) to illustrate this dimensionality. One room is the self that we see and others see, the public self that we show the world and helps us fit in. The second room is our private self and carries certain truths and perceptions only known to us. Another room is the blind self that others can see but we are not aware of. The fourth room, and perhaps the largest, is the hidden or unknown self that holds parts of ourselves that neither others nor we can see. The work of spiritual practice, therapy, art, and education at their highest is to support us in coming to know all of these selves.

The pre-condition or foundation for becoming more integrated is the ability to live with the very particular circumstances, conditions, and callings of our lives in ways that promote dignity for self. This dignity arises when we are continually pursuing what gives us great joy; “following our bliss” as Joseph Campbell put it. At a psychological level, this involves becoming increasingly secure within ourselves while also seeing challenging and unsettling situations as questions to who we are. It is to see personal and social freedom as an on-going process with no end point. To the extent we know and become in our actions the truth of our multi-dimensionality and the dynamic play of polarities that animate existence is the extent to which we will be free.

There are certain truths about ourselves, however, that were lost in childhood when our parents did not accept some part of ourselves and we learned it was better to shut this part off than to risk losing their love. Other truths we have repressed culturally

through the fear-based philosophies, beliefs, stories, images, and practices we uphold. Many voices and lives have been numbed out or obliterated through colonization, addiction, violence, war, and ecocide. There are some realities that are painful including illness, aging, death, and the loss of friends and family. In some cases entire lineages of cultures and ways of living close to the land have been co-opted, largely into servicing an unsustainable world economic engine. Forgetting, denying, and suppressing the wounds we all carry reflect our deep desire for security and comfort. Can we see our hiding as a compassionate act?

Coming to terms with what has happened to us and figuring out how to take an active, conscious part in recreating ourselves and the world requires reclaiming 'parts' lodged away deep in our being. These parts, which constitute our lifeforce or deepest potential, are hidden under various psychological survival strategies. Many of our strategies, in the form of unconscious habits and self-centred interest, worked at one time to minimize the pain of being psychologically and/or physically wounded. It may have been as simple as hiding your true feelings as a child to avoid upsetting your parents. In reward for hiding your feelings, your parents were not annoyed and you were 'loved.' Now an adult, the circumstances may be different and we still believe somewhere inside us that our deepest feelings still do not matter. The hiding goes unnoticed and we learn to shamefully accept that we are not good enough and not worthy of giving and receiving love.

Whatever strategies were developed to hide a part of our lifeforce no longer work in anyone's best interest, but we still hold on to them as if the war were still raging. Clearing the way to be compassionate, ethical, and creative in the present moment puts us on a path from survival to freedom. Reclaiming our lifeforce, however, is not easy. American spiritual teacher Adyashanti (1999) writes that:

In order to be truly free, you must desire to know the truth more than you want to feel good. Because if feeling good is your goal, then as soon as you feel better you will lose interest in what is true. This does not mean that feeling good or experiencing love and bliss is a bad thing. Given the choice, anyone would choose to feel bliss rather than sorrow. It simply means that if this desire to feel good is stronger than the yearning to see, know, and experience Truth, then this desire will

always be distorting the perception of what is Real, while corrupting one's deepest integrity.

I want to speak about Truth as an experiential matter and in plain terms. As humans we all experience—at different points in our life—helplessness, anger and rage, lust and desire, hatred, joy, compassion, and confusion. These feelings and states are part of our bio-psycho-social constitution. It is also true that we are bodies held by the earth, pulled by gravity, and that change dramatically, heal, have aches and pains, and eventually croak through some way or another. Our bodies are the very matrix through which we are connected to the world. Most of us have minds that are continuously engaged in trying to make sense of the world through reflection, questioning, planning, and pattern recognition. I believe that we all have a basic sense of what it feels like when we are respecting or being 'true' to oneself. Often, we experience this sense when we are hearing and heeding our 'calling' in the world. For practical purposes, we can consider the Truth as truths that are located in the body, mind, heart at the personal level.

And as we look closely at the truths of personal experience, it becomes possible to see how our particular state of being is always part of some larger, unfolding process; feeling resistance to the playfulness of another prods the defences one has constructed against allowing play inside his or her own life; the tension and heat of anger, fully experienced without judgment, yielding to sadness about how one continues to deny his or her own needs; deep fatigue in the body calling for the mind to rest. Most of the time, I think we are unconscious and resistant to these kinds of truths because they represent some kind of change wanting to occur and involve letting go of our identification with a specific state of being. Arnold Mindel (1986, 1992) suggests that it is helpful to distinguish between states and process and emphasizes practices that help us become adept at attending to the unfolding flow of life as it is experienced moment to moment. The invitation of practices such as mindfulness, for example, is to be present to our state, watch, feel, and sometimes 'name' it without attempting to change it and see how our state will change on its own. The Daoists spoke about our natural way of being as one of flowing like water and advocated becoming pliant and receptive in body and mind to life and having banks high and strong enough to contain and regulate the flow.

10,000 ways of being

Investigating the truth about ourselves and developing the capacity to go with and contain the flow of life is a lifelong process that can be fostered as a central part of an educational experience. A problem, as I see it, is that this is not what most schooling is about. There are enormous costs for students and educators as a consequence of not investigating these truths, which include psychological wounding, numbing, and disembodiment. I believe that our capacity to address personal, social, and ecological problems hinges upon cultivating *ways of being* that attend to the continuum of states we experience and support us in being mindful midwives to the processes of growth that lead us into living with awe, gratitude, amusement, and even excitement about experiencing life deeply, fully. These ways of being include knowing how to be firm and even aggressive when it is called for and the art of being patient when we can only wait for directions to emerge. There is also the wisdom of being playful like a child when a situation has become serious, being a silent, witnessing companion to someone in distress, or critically deconstructing the ideologies that divide people into neat categories.

These ways of being are seeded within all of us through our evolutionary history, one's culture, family, and peers as well as the various institutions we are part of. Carl Jung used the concept of archetypes to represent the entire accumulated experience of organic life and human civilization (Jung, 1971). We inherit in our consciousness and development many different ways of being that reflect our history. At the biological level we see the stages of human evolution reflected in how the growing fetus takes different forms. The human brain has 'older' parts that reflect our ancestry with lizards and primates. Our bodyminds are hardwired in a way to respond in particular ways to trauma and stress that are connected to survival, protection, and belonging to the group. As Peter Levine has demonstrated through his work in somatic experiencing, these older parts of the brain also know how to heal and clear traumatic experiences (Levine & Frederick, 1997). The development and diversity of human civilization, what anthropologist Wade Davis (2001) calls the *ethnosphere*, contains structures that continue to order personal and social identities. The consciousness of warring tribes, for example, is still very much present in groups, communities, organizations, and states and is a powerful way of defending territory. Unfortunately for

the planet and our survival as a species, most of the world has yet to make the shift to a global consciousness capable of taking mass joint efforts to turn things around.

One function of education is to teach us about all the wonderful and horrible things that constitute life, all the events and experiences that, whether we like it or not, are part of personal or collective stories. Knowing even just a few of these stories and their many interpretations helps us to see that there are many different ways of being in the world, there is a vast range of human experience where many have gone before. The Daoists speak here of life in all its manifestations as the 10,000 things, the phenomenal world. But the spiritual adept is advised to not get fixated on phenomenal reality, as it is the groundless, nameless, ungraspable Source from which life emerges and passes back into and that one seeks to unite with and awaken to. To use an arts metaphor, knowing the difference between the 10,000 things and the One is like knowing the difference between the person of the actor and the character(s) he or she performs on stage. The performed character is only one dimension of the person and a good actor knows the difference between him or herself and the role. A great actor is able to receive or infuse the role with something that transcends the character and evokes deep feeling in the audience. It becomes difficult to know exactly 'who' is performing. The classroom is also a theatre where the characters of consciousness meet and, in playing out our many masks, where we keep asking both what world of possibilities these masks reveal to us and 'who' it is that is performing (Romanyshyn, 2012).

E/dao/cation

Chapter 14 from the classic Daoist text, the *Dao De Jing* (Lao-Tsu, 1991/1972), points to how we might hold the question of 'who':

Empty yourself of everything.

Let the mind rest at peace.

The ten thousand things rise and fall while the Self watches their return.

They grow and flourish and then return to the source.

Returning to the source is stillness, which is the way of nature.

The way of nature is unchanging.

Knowing constancy is insight.

*Not knowing constancy leads to disaster.
Knowing constancy, the mind is open.
With an open mind, you will be openhearted.
Being openhearted, you will act royally.
Being royal, you will attain the divine.
Being divine, you will be at one with the Tao.
Being at one with the Tao is eternal.
And though the body dies, the Tao will never pass away. (n. p.)*

Other religions and traditions speak of the same source; Buddha nature, God, Brahman, the Devine, Spirit, Allah, the Self, unity consciousness, etc. All advise different ways for joining with the source that giveths and takeths away life. In walking a path of integration there is an increasing realization, and sometimes sudden breakthrough, that what these traditions speak about is an experienced reality rather than an abstract, intellectual concept. I believe that educators and students would benefit from understanding who they are by understanding the many different ways of being in the world, but also by gaining direct insight into their own dao-nature. The reason is that nothing else affords us ontological security—the sense of being truly at home in the world, for better or for worse. Although life is often tumultuous and unstable, the sense of being fundamentally okay, of being part of the eternal Dao, reveals that the answers to our existential questions cannot be wholly answered with the 10,000 things.

I do not press for any particular tradition or set of practices, as it is up to each person to discover, question, and formulate his or her own view of what the path entails based on experience. Rather, I propose a set of questions that guide my own journey into knowing my specific place along the path in the phenomenal world and in listening with ever more stillness for the mystery at the heart of my life. Of course, these questions are like Zen *koans* as they are questions that exhaust the mind because they cannot be answered by the mind and are practices in and of themselves.

What brings me joy? Who is joyful?

What scares me? Who is scared?

What do I need? Who needs?

What must I remember? Who does or does not remember?

Where am I going? Who goes?

What are my gifts to this world? Who has the gifts? Who knows about them?

Who am I? Who asks this question?

The first part of each set of questions attends to the fleshing out of our sense of self and individuality. They are, in some ways, ego-strengthening questions in the most positive sense of the term ego. Having an ongoing, solid, defined sense of who we are, what we want, what is difficult for us, and so on is a vital part of taking care of ourselves, having healthy relationships, standing up for what we think is right, having security and confidence in who we are, and what our limitations, edges, and wounds are. Such questions are important on the path to becoming whole because it is through knowing ourselves thoroughly that the other questions can take on real significance. If it is really true that the 'self' is impermanent, groundless, and a moment-to-moment manifestation of an eternal divine, how can we release our grip on something to know this if we don't know what this self is? As Engler (1984) put it, "*you have to be somebody before you can be nobody*" (p. 31, emphasis in original).

Romanyshyn (2010) suggests that the 'who' question is a psychological move:

It is a move into the depths that personifies one's behavior and experience. It complicates things and it differs quite radically from the question of 'why'. The latter asks for reasons, for a reasoned and reasonable explanation. It tends to look for answers outside oneself. The former situates such explanations in a field between 'you' and 'other' that opens the possibility for a dialogue. (p. 97)

The educational significance of these questions is rooted in the hermeneutic between the asker and the asked. The asker—whether a teacher, a text, a child, a partner, an experience in our life, or some place within ourselves—calls us to consider what our stance and disposition is in response to a situation. If this relationship is characterized by a great deal of trust and acceptance, it becomes possible for the asked to be vulnerable and pliant enough to explore themselves to great depths. The asker helps us to see the constructs of the 'I,' the self, 'me,' and 'my answers' as constructions with many masks that we can put on and take off. Our practice as educators, Romanyshyn (2010) says, should remember that the student and educator who come for learning and teaching

are “not the character(s) who come for an education” (p. 97). The student and educator who are continually asked who are donning and discarding masks are free to develop and grow in innumerable ways of being, other points of view and perspectives are recognized, and the 10,000 things are exhausted until the boundary between asker and asked is dissolved. What processes, then, move us towards communities, relationships, and individuals that engage in this sort of sacred dialogue? What is needed to facilitate such a process and who provides the leadership for this process?

Inner work as heuristic research

I take the above questions on at a personal level to discover how I can become a more integrated educator and how this process that weaves my un/becoming can be facilitated with others. This integration and facilitation involves attending to various dimensions of experience including my beliefs, my history, my body, my emotions, and my interpersonal relationships. I continuously refer to this attending as *inner work* (Cohen, 2009; Mindel, 1992), which is conducted through various practices that grant insight into the multi-dimensionality of human experience. More than this, they also transform the very person taking up such practices.

Inner work is essentially about a process of discovering, uncovering, recovering, and integrating all the dimensions I spoke to in the proceeding section; the body-mind-heart-soul (henceforth referred to as bodymind). As a research process inner work is heuristics research “through which one discovers the nature and meaning of experience and develops methods and procedures for further investigation and analysis” (Moustakas, 1990)¹. Inner work as a heuristic process asks what the nature and

1 There are a number of phases in heuristics research that the process follows, although these phases do not unfold predictably or mechanically (Moustakas, 1994, 1990);

1. Initial Engagement – Discovery of the interest, passion and question that motivates the research.
2. Immersion – Living the question in all states – waking, sleeping, dreaming, etc. There is a desire to become “one with what one is seeking to know” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 16).
3. Incubation – Retreating from intentional focus on the question so that the tacit dimensions can emerge, the sense of unity or wholeness between the parts precedes intuition and guides the researcher into untapped directions and sources of meaning.” (p. 22)
4. Illumination – The “breakthrough into conscious awareness of qualities and a clustering of qualities into themes inherent in the question” that occurs “when the researcher is in a receptive state of mind without conscious striving or concentration” (p. 29)

meaning of dis/integrated experience are and develops ways of inquiring into the very nature of this dis/integration (also referred to later on as dis/embodiment, fragmentation, alienation, wounding, etc.). The word 'heuristic' comes from the Greek *heuriskein*, meaning "to discover" and involves suspending hypotheses and preset methods and procedures for answering questions. Heuristics as a research process centralizes the consciousness of the researcher, which includes perceptions, sense, intuition, and knowledge—all valuable places for expanding knowledge and transforming the researcher (Moustakas, 1990, p. 10). An increasingly integrated sense of self emerges in the heuristic process of discovery, opening up the way for more subtle questions and fine-tunings. A story about a dexterous butcher in the translated writings of Daoist sage Chuang-Tzu (Hamill & Seaton, 1998) illustrates this process of refinement:

Ting the cook was cutting meat free from the bones of an ox for Lord Wen-hui. His hands danced as his shoulders turned with the step of his foot and bending of his knee. With a shush and a hush, the blade sang following his lead, never missing a note. Ting and his blade moved as though dancing to "The Mulberry Grove," or as if conducting the "Ching-shou" with a full orchestra.

Lord Wen-hui exclaimed, "What a joy! It's good, is it not, that such a simple craft can be so elevated?"

Ting laid aside his knife. "All I care about is the Way. If find it in my craft, that's all. When I first butchered an ox, I saw nothing but ox meat. It took three years for me to see the whole ox. Now I go out to meet it with my whole spirit and don't think only about what meets the eye. Sensing and knowing stop. The spirit goes where it will, following the natural contours, revealing large cavities, leading the blade through openings, moving onward according to actual form—yet not touching the central arteries or tendons and ligaments, much less touching bone.

-
5. Explication – The process of fully examining what has awakened in consciousness, using a number of processes including self-dialogue, self-disclosure, indwelling, and focusing
 6. Creative Synthesis – Explicit knowledge is arrived at with intuitive knowledge as a bridge to the tacit, where the researcher has allowed the "inward life on the question to grow, in such a way that a comprehensive expression of the essences of the phenomenon investigated is realized." (p. 32)

“A good cook need sharpen his blade but once a year. He cuts cleanly. An awkward cook sharpens his knife every month. He chops. I’ve used this knife for nineteen years, carving thousands of oxen. Still the blade is as sharp as the first time it was lifted from the whetstone. At the joints there are spaces, and the blade has no thickness. Entering with no thickness where there is space, the blade may move freely where it will: there’s plenty of room to move. Thus, after nineteen years, my knife remains as sharp as it was that first day.

“Even so, there are always difficult places, and when I see rough going ahead, my heart offers proper respect as I pause to look deeply into it. Then I work slowly, moving my blade with increasing subtlety until—kerplop!—meat falls apart like a crumbling clod of earth. I then raise my knife and assess my work until I’m fully satisfied. Then I give my knife a good cleaning and put it carefully away.”

Lord Wen-hui said, “That’s good, indeed! Ting the cook has shown me how to find the Way to nurture life.” (p. 19–20)

Like the butcher, the heuristic researcher is concerned questions, concepts, methodologies, and other dimensions of the research process as “flow[ing] out of inner awareness, meaning, and inspiration” (Hamill & Seaton, 1998, p. 11) and seeks through increasingly refined movements “to reveal more fully the essence or meaning of a phenomenon of human experience” (p. 42) without dulling such experience through trying to “predict or determine causal relationships” (p. 42). My own consciousness as an educator is centralized in the research through my experience and study of eastern meditative and martial arts practices (*neigong* and *taijiquan*). The martial arts, in particular the internal martial arts of Asia, and their associated philosophies (i.e., Daoism in China and Zen Buddhism in Japan) offer a practical means of investigation and integrating bodymind to such a high degree that they are unified in action. My questions, concepts, and methodologies arise out of the inner awareness, meanings, and inspirations cultivated through such practices. Simultaneous to this integration within myself is an awakening to my integration with the world through a sort of relational field; my interconnectedness with other beings. Like the butcher, I discover how to be in these relationships in such a way that the blade of my being is increasingly sensitive to the presence of spaces, hard edges, and the flesh of encounters with others. I look for room within myself and within situations with which I am presented to move more freely.

The inner feelings of such experiences are ones in which I am filled with vibration and love for what I am intimately encountering.

As researcher and inner worker, this process

demands the total presence, honesty, maturity, and integrity of researcher who not only strongly desires to know and understand but is willing to commit endless hours of sustained immersion and focused concentration on one central question, to risk the opening of wounds and passionate concerns, and to undergo the personal transformation that exists as a possibility in every heuristic journey. (Moustakas, 1990, p. 14)

I take up a study of self-transformation and intersubjectivity through contemplative and martial arts from the perspective that they will remain limited, rote exercises unless I take what arises through these practices as questions to myself and to my relationships with others. Aware of the historical and contemporary understanding of martial arts as well as my own outside status to Asian culture, I distinguish the practice of internal martial arts (*neijia*) as a technical undertaking used only in combat from a Way of understanding how to live and act ethically and creatively in all situations. It is in how the movements, awareness, and life energy of my embodied inner work become yoked with my daily life that I learn how to respond in an integrated way to whatever arises in the classroom dojo.

It is here, at the nexus of my daily life and my practice of *neigong* and *taijiquan*, where I begin to flesh out the relationship between the martial arts practitioner who learns how to feel/think/move and my experience of being an educator. Many of the practices focus on developing conscious connection to the breath, the ground, the immediate environment, and the structure of a very powerful and dynamic human body. Inhabiting this felt-sense relationship as the ground of my everyday life and engagement with students transforms each encounter into sites of embodied inquiry. Meditation in action! At the highest level of mastery, the movements and actions of the martial artist become indistinguishable from the person. For the educator interested in integrating all aspects of his or her experience, a heuristic practice of the contemplative and martial arts takes the practitioner towards this goal.

Dojo inquiry

In pursuing my questions around bodymind integration, there have been four sites or *dojos* of heuristic inquiry. As I articulate with my co-authors (Bai, Park, & Cohen, forthcoming):

Dojo (道場) is a Japanese term for a place where, typically, a martial art is practiced. Dojo literally means ‘place of the Way’. The reference of *do* (*dao* in Chinese) is to universal energy. *Jo* means place. Dojo then means the place to practice the Way of being aligned with universal energy. Initially dojos were adjunct to Buddhist temples where people meditated. To this day, certain Zen groups prefer to call their meditation halls ‘dojos’ rather than ‘zendo’. A contemporary martial art teacher and Japanese culture specialist, H. E. Davey (2007) explains: “the term [dojo] has meditative connotations and describes the training hall used in some Japanese cultural arts” (p. 35). In Japanese arts of all kinds, the purpose of the practice is two-fold: (1) to use the practice to facilitate learning how to be in the *do* (*dao*); and (2) to be in the process of perfecting one’s self in order to be increasingly in the flow of the universal energy. The two processes are completely integrated. Any emphasis of one over the other, consciously or unconsciously, will impede the process. Dojo is, then, the place where we increasingly strive for and cultivate integration of mind, body, heart, soul and spirit (again, ‘mindbody’ or ‘bodymind’ for short), along with the development of a felt sense of community.

The first dojo is my family of origin and present family. My understanding of my parents’ upbringing and my recollection of early family environment give me some insight into how I have survived and resiliently adapted to various circumstances, why I carry certain shadows and suffering, and, most importantly, how culture and context shape the dis/integration of body-mind-heart-soul. As well, over the doctoral journey, I inhabited two new roles; husband and father. These roles offer me opportunities to reflect on parts of myself that are not integrated and how I can be present and attuned in my closest relationships.

The second dojo is XPOD and its members. XPOD, a group consisting of Avraham Cohen, Heesoon Bai, Tom Culham, Shahar Rabi, Saskia Tait, and myself, has been meeting 1–2 times a month since September 2010. We have presented at numerous national and international conferences. This ‘collaboratory’ is an experiment in creating a contemplative community that can attend to the growth of the individuals and of relationships between us (Bai et al., 2013). Our efforts at integrating spiritual, therapeutic, and group development practices are illustrating to me how containers of trusting, caring relations allow us to see and be seen by others in our humanity.

The third context is my enrollment in the Arts Education program at SFU. The program instructors and students inspired me to go into creative process, into *poesis* and *auto-poesis*, through martial arts performance, freestyle rap, spoken word, clown, poetic inquiry, and embodied autoethnography². These practices have been vital to my research because heuristic research is qualitative and makes use of “careful descriptions, illustrations, metaphors, poetry, dialogue, and other creative renderings” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 42).

The fourth relationship is with Sifu Lou Crockett and my tutelage with him in *neigong* and *taijiquan* since October 2010. Lou is fortunate to have both an exceptionally high degree of mastery in the arts that my dad was trying to teach me and is able to make the art accessible and practical through his dedication to understanding how the subtlest aspects of *neigong* and *taijiquan* are taught. What is significant in this relationship is that much of Lou's instruction has been either one-on-one or in small groups, which often included Heesoon and Avraham. The direct, hands-on feedback he gives me continuously puts me at the edge of my practice and perception of how mind and body relate.

Notes to the reader

*Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing
and rightdoing there is a field.*

² You can view my comprehensive exam performance at <http://vimeo.com/m/34571354>. Thanks to Saskia Tait for filming the performance on her iPhone!

I'll meet you there.

—Rumi (in Barks, 2009, p. 123)

I encourage you to read and draw from this work in a way that animates and enlivens your own path of personal and professional inquiry. I take it to be a sign of maturity that we read as a way of reflecting on our own path. In a contemplative engagement with texts, we allow the words and feelings being communicated by the writer to enter us so that our hearts and imagination can be opened and moved. I think we find a kind of communion through words. There are, I'm sure, certain ways of speaking and writing here that do not resonate for you despite my best efforts. If there are places in yourself that cannot connect with what I am speaking about because they are in a realm of experience and perception that are unfamiliar or strange to you, I encourage you to reflect on the feeling of inaccessibility and resistance and note how you want to push back, pull apart, question, or gain clarity. See if you can appreciate the sheer difference of lifeworlds and imagine what it might be like to take up these perspectives and questions or be someone like me. My hope is that reading this work can be an opportunity to do some of your own inner work.

Chapter 1 – The Heart Calls

In this chapter I work with a dream to demonstrate a process of doing inner work in a way that touches the various concerns about wounding, healing, and creativity that will be raised in Chapter 2. This process involves looking at what surfaces from the unconscious in our dreams, our memories, childhood and adolescent experiences, and the various symbols, struggles, and questions that are unique to understanding our own existential cores. I share personal details about my inner work to give a snapshot of how I have engaged in this process. Focusing on the images of the knife and the heart from my dream, a memory of my father practicing martial arts, and my experience of my body, I set the stage for 'embodiment work' as critical component of inner work, which I will explore in Chapter 4.

I awake from a dream one morning in the spring of 2012 and recall the following:

I'm in the back of a large, old, brown Cadillac. Such a vehicle has appeared many times in my dreams. There is a driver and someone in the passenger seat who are both friends, although I can't make out who they are. I'm sitting in the back seat with a friend that I know well. Next to our legs, I notice that we both have metal boxes on the floor of the back seat and there is a bomb inside. The bomb is made of some kind of pulsing, organic matter. There is a cylindrical slot coming out of the top of the box. It is winter and the weather is sunny and cold. We are driving quickly down country roads trying to get away from the police and the various roadblocks that have been put up to stop us. There is a sense of urgency and anxious excitement amongst everyone in the car, although the two in the front seem like they've done this before and are smiling. For some reason, I know that the bomb will go off if a knife is jammed quickly and forcefully into the slot. If I let it, panic and fear overcome me. My friend in the back seat and I practice moving a knife slowly in and out of the slot into each of our boxes so as to not set our bombs off.

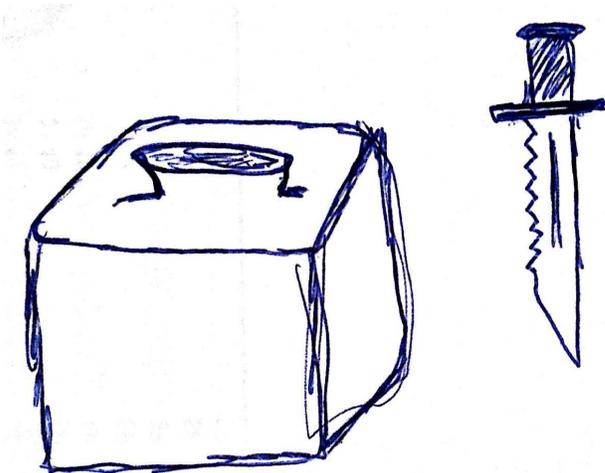


Figure 1: Heartbox and Inner Knife

I took some guidance in working with dreams from Robert Johnson (1986) in his book *Inner Work: Using Dreams and Active Imagination for Personal Growth*. He suggests a four step process where one a) makes a number of associations and potential meanings that arise from the images; b) looks at what parts of our inner lives (the particular struggles, dynamics, and questions we have within ourselves) the dream images represent; c) integrates the first two steps to create a sense of meaning from the dream; and d) recognizes some kind of ritual or action to concretize the meaning of the dream in physical experience. The bulk of this chapter describes how I worked through these steps and gives orientation and meaning to the research that I take up in the rest of the dissertation. Throughout this process I talked with a number of friends and peers about the dream, thus creating a 'dreaming community' that supported my process. I credit Avraham Cohen for introducing me to the concept of a Dream Community. When we share our dreams with others, they become part of the dream dialogue as their inner worlds participate in the understanding of the dreams, which are reflected back to us.

Associations and potential meanings

As I sit with the dream, I sense a whole range of associations between the images, feelings, and possible meanings of it. I feel a strong resonance with the bomb containing a heart ready to explode. The heart is my existential core wanting to emerge.

The pulsing force of the heart represents a danger to authority and normal avenues of travel. One reading I make here is that the path I need to head along will require me to question and resist what my society expects of me. There are few, if any, maps that my society has for the path I need to travel. I am not alone in the predicament in the dream as there are parts of myself represented by others in the dream, who also have caged, explosive hearts. In my outer life, there are many people who live with varying degrees of quiet desperation.

Those in the driver and navigator seats could represent parts of myself that I need to be in greater dialogue with. They are the ones driving, not I. Have I given up control to others to decide how and where I am going? Who are these people in the driver's seat? They are older and seem much less worried than I; there is a sense of mentorship and wisdom in how they are calmly driving. Where, I ask, is the calm wisdom in the face of emergency showing up in my life?

These figures are likely part of my persona. Carl Jung wrote that the persona is a construction and that the deconstruction of the persona is required to know our unique, whole selves. "The dissolution of the persona is the release of involuntary fantasy" (Jung, 1999/1953, p. 160), putting the emerging individual into "a stark encounter with reality, with no false veils or adornments of any kind" (Jung, 1954, p. 238). The bomb is a threat to such veils and adornments. An explosion would lead to chaos and no longer being in control, my deepest fear.

It seems I only have three options in the dream. The first option is to react out of panic and fear, causing my body to move in a tense, frenzied, jarring way. This would cause the knife to thrust into the metal box and cause the heart to explode. Another option is to move the knife slowly like the dexterous butcher, to go into the fear and chaos with curiosity. The hard metal box containing what I sense is my heart does not allow me to see it directly and must be worked with as a condition of the situation. The third option is to precipitate the explosion consciously, a middle way between the first two options that takes me into the explosive energy of the bomb without becoming completely overwhelmed by it and potentially harming myself and/or others.

The dream arrives at a time in my life when marriage, starting a family, and the

pressure of making an income with my PhD when I'm done are front and centre experiences. Out of panic I peruse academic job openings across three Internet tabs while I try to write thesis notes and arrange music for the wedding. I run around my house trying to finish an unrealistic should-do list, my mind already on the next activity. Panic shifts faces and becomes my internal thundering-voice-of-judgment: "It's time to be serious, Sean, no more playing around with this flimsy arts and contemplative education stuff. Stop wasting your time doing this dream work."³

Instead of resisting and ignoring the voice, I come to a stop. The connection between a subtle anxiety about not being good enough, needing to always do more, and the tightness in my chest is now more fully known because I have stopped to say hello. Simply feeling this, the tension begins to abate. I notice the pulse of sadness through my body, which then becomes subsumed by the sunlight coming in from the kitchen window, bathing a sleepy cat in delicious warmth. The to-do list and my attitude toward it are re-examined and I make more realistic expectations about how slowly my heart needs to move in these transitions. Deep breathing and a vigorous dancing around the living room emerge as official business agenda items.

David Applebaum (1995) calls our attention to 'stop' moments as moments of risk, crisis, opportunity, and different ways of engaging the situation at hand. For arts educator Lynn Fels (2011) these moments draw attention to how play, performative inquiry, and reflection support participants in an improvisational performance to recognize moments of learning as *performative inquiry*. I start to resonate with the interpretation of the vehicle in my dream as the opportunity I have in my doctoral journey to create something, improvise in some way. Part of my panic has to do with a sense of lack, the feeling that "the hole in the heart desires filling" (Leggo, 1996, p. 240)⁴. Those

3 Isabella Colalillo Kates (2005) points out how the Inner Critic can shut us off from connecting to our creativity and the aesthetic: "The Inner Critic, the composite voice of the many external critics that try to govern our life, wants us to obey its overbearing commanding voice. The more we do so, the more victimized and uncreative we feel. Our resident Critic uses our creative energy to machinate against the will of the Innate Creator . . . Its main role is to protect us from taking risks, from overreaching our dreams. In its attempts to spare us from failure, usually through shame and fear, the Critic cuts us off from the creative energy of the Creator." (Kates, 2005, p. 202)

4 Carl Leggo shares with us that this hole pushes him to love and want to be with others and that desire stemming from a personal sense of lack can be "liberating, strengthening, encouraging;" our motivation, resolve, and wanting for something satisfying and fulfilling (Leggo, 1996, p. 240).

in the front seat represent the mentors, inside and out, that afford me the backseat freedom to attend to my ticking bomb. They too have heart-bombs, but also know how to drive backcountry circles around the soul police. They are experienced travellers. We cannot pull off to the side of the road to attend to the heart, it must happen now as we move. There is no more time. I have spent much time reading and writing about the ideas and wisdom of others. Where is my creative, explosive edge in all of this? Can I also entertain the identity that would dance right into the anxiety and into unknown potentially explosive territory? One familiar identity has stayed secure by going for the peace experience through avoiding doing or saying things that might offend others and buffeting my own voice in hiding behind the authoritative words of respected others.

I am slowly and precisely cutting the sutures of the heart in the metal box with a knife. I see the dream as a calling to some sort of inner discipline for work with the energy that arises from the opening of a wounded, sutured heart. I cannot see the heart directly, but I have an entry point and know that I must work carefully and attentively as this ride swerves in the gravel of open roads and detours. Backseat, inner surgery of an exceptional degree.

There is inner work going on here and it seems to be a kind of alchemy that requires creating a strong crucible within my being: the metal box capable of withstanding internal and external pressures. Soulular materials mix, fizzle, and bubble where the known and unknown meet. When are the conditions ripe for the breaking and remaking of a heart-soul that longs for unencumbered, free passage beyond the roadblocks? To make this journey, I want to discover what the image of the inner knife represents. So I need a crucible, like the metal box in my dream, to heat and cook the dreams, visions, images, sensations, and movements that arise and encourage them to complete themselves.

As a part of the dream work process, I want to retrace my steps and look at what parts of my inner life (my particular struggles, dynamics, and questions) the dream images represent. Who are the various selves represented by all of these figures in my

Institutionally defined lack likely means that "people must be programmed, filled, activated . . . prepared for roles." A poetic rendering of lack, however, "suggests experimentation, risk-taking, mistake-making, trying on different masks or subject positions" (Leggo, 1996, p. 240).

dream and what are the different options I seem to have? What are their history and their nature? Who is witnessing this process?

Family life, memory, suffering, and vulnerability

I can trace some of my suffering and resilience to my early family environment. Families are inter-connected systems and much of our behaviour, personality, and ways of relating to others are borne from our interaction (or lack of) with mom, dad, and other close caregivers⁵. I share some details about my parents and my home environment here to give some context to my own internal dynamics and working with my dream. I write from my perspective of what I know of them and what I remember of my home life. I have shared this writing with both of them and they accept it as an honest perspective that reflects how difficult it can be to be good parents, an arena of experience I am just now entering. My tracing has helped all of us remember, reflect, and reinterpret all of our personal histories and to seek resolve in parts of this history that have not been given care. As I explain more fully in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, knowing our early personal history is important for educators as we consciously and unconsciously bring it into the classroom, it affects how we perceive ourselves and our students, and can help us to appreciate the multi-dimensionality of the students in our midst. I share these personal details for the purpose of illustrating the process of how I connect all these dots and to reveal a bit of my own humanity, both of which are critical to establishing warmth, empathy, and connection with students, and you the reader.

My father Larry grew up in a poor household in Hamilton, Ontario as the eldest of four children. His father held the power in the house, was addicted to alcohol, extremely violent, and took out his rage on my dad through severe physical and mental abuse. In his late teens my dad took up martial arts and found a way to physically confront his father and stop, at one level, the physical violence brought upon him. His mother was quite submissive and complicit and did little to protect the children. She often told them

⁵ Various theories of family systems therapy point to how inter-generational patterns of relating, rules and structures, boundaries, power, family subsystems, and projections (to name but a few variables) shape and are shaped by our personality structures. See the works of Virginia Satir, Sue Johnson, Carl Whitaker, Murray Bowen, and Salvador Minuchin.

either to 'suck it up' or that they deserved it. His mother and father did not communicate much at all and his father would frequently abuse his mother physically. Both of his parents died of cancer quite young, before I was born. I often hear my dad speak about living most of his life with a great deal of anxiety, low self-worth, and feelings of abandonment. When I was born, he made a vow to never repeat the abuse and neglect that was inflicted upon him and he tells me often of how he gave my sister and me the love he never received. His resilience, clearly visible in his vibrant sense of humour and physicality (he was a body builder and martial artist for many years), was central to breaking the cycle of intergenerational violence.

My mother, Mary, grew up in a poor household in England as the second oldest of three children. Both parents, particularly her mother, were emotionally distant and she describes her mother as never having offered any affection, approval, love, or encouragement. Her father was a kind, soft, and timid man who was often at work, did as he was told, and was afraid to show his love. My mother and her older brother were very close and were often taken care of by their aunt and grandmother, well-loved surrogate mothers who had artistic, compassionate, witty, and wild engagements with life. My grandmother divorced and married another man who was physically abusive to my mother. Unable to stand the abuse at home any longer, she left home at 15 and figured out how to house and feed herself. Wanting to start a new life, she came to Canada at the age of 19 to visit family. My mother met my father, 13 years her senior, and she saw him as her knight in shining armour. They married shortly after they met and I was born when my mom was 20 years old, my sister, Nicole, coming a year and half later.

The home environment had its stresses. Dad was frequently anxiety-ridden and out of work. He was often the caretaker when he wasn't practicing martial arts, working as a bouncer at a local hotel, or working various sales jobs. Getting sweaty, engaging in rough play with other men, and using his body seemed to be his ways of staying grounded and in control. Mom would work long hours, took the role of disciplinarian, and managed the budget. At the age of twenty-two she became the marketing director for a large shopping mall and proved that even without a college degree, she could use her wits and determination to land a good job. Although she would have preferred to stay at home, bake cakes, and do things 'normal' moms do, she made time check in to see how

I was doing with my homework and to see how I was feeling. There was food on the table, clothes on our bodies, a roof overhead, and some positive connection with other kids, but little in the way of magic because my parents were just barely scraping by.

I have few memories of play and adventure during my earliest years. I grew up quickly and learned how to do things on my own. There was little intimate communication between my parents and the tensions between them were well hidden to protect us. When they told my sister and me that they were splitting, we were in shock. I was nine years old. I would not understand how their unresolved personal histories unconsciously collided until I was much older. The divorce and the years following it were difficult. Throughout the separation, divorce, and into my teenage years, I stayed focused on school, kept quiet, and tried to distance myself from the emotional pain everyone was feeling. My sister took a very different path and got lost in gangs, drugs, and spent significant time in jail before she started to take some responsibility for her life. I thought of myself as being immune to what was going on and could not understand why my family was struggling with deep emotional pain. I realize now that the lack of affection, closeness, and warmth between my parents had a detrimental impact on my sister and me. I buried my feelings of joy and pain away in a box like the one in my dream. My sister seemed overwhelmed by her feelings and her life exploded into a mess. It makes sense to me that I would both seek ways to protect myself from feeling by 'staying in my head' and seek the love and approval of others so that somehow my feelings, which I did not want to deal with, could be held. Later in this chapter and in Chapters 3, 5, and 6 I speak about how these patterns unconsciously and consciously played out in educational environments.

Survival strategies as resources: An early memory

Both my parents are caring, supportive people and have always been extremely encouraging of me to find my own path in life, make my own decisions and get to know myself deeply. Even though they could only provide the basics, I felt encouraged to grow and make my own choices. My parents knew the pain of being told that they were

worthless. I somehow saw (and see now) that I had the space, determination, and capabilities to develop my power and potential in whatever I applied myself towards⁶. When I review my life, I am still shocked that I turned out to be such a resilient person, given the environments that each of my parents and I grew up in. The degrees of dysfunction and trauma they experienced are immense and I feel it was by some act of grace that they were strong enough to not repeat much of the violence that was inflicted upon them. I think I benefitted immensely from their high degree of ‘differentiation;’ they were able to sufficiently separate their feelings of hurt from their own childhoods from their actions to raise me in such a way that I was still able to flourish even if there wasn’t much joy, play, and magic.

As I read the above story about my parents and the environment I grew up in, I can start to trace out the ways in which their survival strategies for dealing with difficult childhoods were in fact resources. My father learned martial arts and to be in his body as a way of coping with the violence and the onslaught of depression, anxiety, and feelings of low self-worth. My mother learned to think for herself, improvise, pay the bills, and successfully make her way in the world of work because there did not seem to be any other choice if she was going to provide the basics for herself, and later for my father, sister, and me.

Their survival strategies were part of my upbringing, and I consider them to be constraints and resources for understanding and unfolding my own potential. In a way, they are part of the walls of the metal box holding my heart; a protective barrier needed for survival. I learned from my mother the value of using my mind, doing well academically, and succeeding in the realm of work— as well as the dark side of being obsessed with my success. These parts have always made sense to me. However, for many years I could never relate to the ways my dad sees the world. Because I never experienced physical violence growing up and spent a lot of time in school hitting the

⁶ My academic success has other layers to it, including the projections I have felt from my family, peers, and teachers. My parents are extremely proud of my accomplishments and tell me that I am doing ‘more’ with my life than they have ever had done. For a time, I felt a boundary between the family and myself because I am the ‘successful one.’ I am the first in my family to go to university and I am living the life my parents never got to have growing up.

books and grew up in car-centric suburbia in the 1980's, I didn't do much in the way of getting into my body. Moving and feeling wasn't really part of my vocabulary.

As part of my comprehensive exam I performed the following narratives as a performative embodied autoethnography (Spry, 2001) as a way of developing phenomenological and narrative descriptions of how inner work and tracing the roots of our life's callings are related. In performing the narrative to an audience, I helped reveal how the images of the knife offer space for the "living, experience, and researching body to be seen and felt" (Spry, 2001, p. 720), and "[feature] concrete action, emotion, embodiment, self-consciousness, and introspection" (Ellis, 2004, p. xix). Here, I am empowered to speak transgressively about "what has been kept hidden . . . what has been kept silenced" (Park-Fuller, as cited in Spry, 2001, p. 706). The performance itself thus becomes an intersection of the known, unknown, and not-yet known worlds of embodied action (Fels, 1998), a living process of expressing known, practiced forms and letting go of forms to realize new, not-yet-known ways of being. Performative inquiry invites us to pay attention to the phenomenological spaces where form and formlessness meet; spaces of intimacy, resistance, fear, and desire. The poem at the end of this chapter, *Mad Schemes*, was also written during the creation of the performance and as an act of performative writing, I learned to create texts that recognize the capacity and limitations of language to represent spaces where intention and improvisation meet. Performative writing "[is a] kind of writing where the body and the spoken word, performance practice and theory, the personal and the scholarly, come together" (Miller & Pelias, as cited in Jones, 2005).

I remember my first glimpse of what was involved in getting into the body when I was twelve years old, hanging out with my dad in a storage room across the hallway from his apartment. Surrounded by a dingy couch, concrete walls, and an elevator power generator, I remember my dad taking his shirt off and rubbing *die da jiu* (Chinese herbal wine) into his hands. The dark liquid would stain his hands a deep brown and the sweet aroma of a various Chinese herbs invigorated my lungs. A very advanced student in *wing chun* (a Chinese martial art, made famous by Bruce Lee) and practitioner of *iron shirt qigong* (a specialized form of internal energy training), he would go to the storage

room to work what he called his internal energy, his *qi*, by striking a 50 lb. canvas bag of steel ball bearings with his palms.

His body was soft and relaxed as he inhaled through his nose. His belly, back and neck contracted as he raised his palm up in the air towards his forehead. As his arm fell, I could hear the weight of his entire being expanding and effortlessly cracking against the bag through the edge of his hand, a blade, an extension of his mind. The deep, full pop of the strikes would resonate through the room as I watched in amazement. I remember the calm fierceness in his eyes. He wasn't doing this to show off or impress himself; there were things going on deep inside that he told me were very still and full of power.

I didn't know what he meant by this, I couldn't relate to his description. He took my hand and pressed my palms deeply into his belly and lower back. As he breathed in, I could feel the condensing of his entire lower abdomen, which then undulated up his torso as he raised his palm in the air. First slowly, then with quick acceleration, an expansion and subtle 'dropping' of his body from his neck, chest, and upper back down to his abdomen brought the palm down with great force.

He stopped after awhile to light up a cigarette, laugh, tell jokes and share with me his unique and quirky wisdom about life; words about living with integrity, vigilance, and love in a world that can be so cruel. Over the course of our many conversations in the storage room, I learned about the cruel world my dad knew as a child, how he carried it internally, and how he sees it reflected in society. The martial arts gave him a way of relating and surviving. Later in his life, long after working as a bouncer in some of Hamilton's roughest hotels, he became more interested in the 'soft,' internal alchemy of Daoist practices such as the *qigong* that he was showing me with this iron palm work. Even with a shift towards practices that worked more with the mind and the breath, he never failed to emphasize that the training had to ultimately have some practical use in combat to protect oneself in a violent, chaotic situation if it could not be avoided.

At some point that day, he lit a candle and turned off the lights to introduce me to meditation. He asked me to focus my eyes softly on the candle and to be aware of the natural movement of my breath. I can still see the light of that candle. I'm not sure how

long we sat for, but we left the dark room into the florescent-lit hallway of the main foyer. Standing with my dad, waiting for the elevator, I was filled with a calm and intensely glowing energy. I felt a sense of expansion and shimmering, of being in a completely different dimension that was intensely present and timeless. *What is this?* I asked myself. I felt a desire to be in this space, to remember it, to return to it.

Suffering

This memory and its images start to serve as reminders to myself about where I come from and how I started the journey of coming to know my heart with, in, and through my body. Within the stories, sparring, jokes, and puffs of cigarette smoke were bigger questions:

How would I face challenges in my life with integrity?

How could I be soft and strong?

How can I cultivate love and grow as a person?

What if living these questions is enlightenment?

These questions, however, had not fully formed into questions that had any real fire in the years following my first meditation experience. I was keen on becoming a doctor in western medicine. My dad's talk of *qi* flew in the face of the biochemical mechanizations I was learning about in my health sciences undergraduate education. But I couldn't forget that first meditation experience of feeling profound peace and was always curious about my dad's *embodied know-how* (Varela, 1999). I started a qigong practice, learned some *wing chun* forms, and practiced punching, blocking, and taking strikes to my body. My dad and I would take rounds out of the heavy bag, and I would sweat and get blisters and cuts on my hands and arms. Even in his late fifties, my dad was fast and sharp and I was always awkwardly powerless against him. I was stiff and usually tried to think conceptually about what I was being shown through bodily contact. He kept telling me to relax, which was frustrating because I always thought I was until he pointed out how clenched my fists, arms, and shoulders were. Despite the rigidity in my body, I really felt like I was connecting with him. He was showing me something and I was listening. I was in my body, to some extent, and there was immediacy to the direct contact I had with him.

Even though I always had a sense that I was being initiated into learning something that was not very common, I didn't see how learning this stuff was useful to success in life. My focus was on school and I was quite happy with living a life of the mind. Successful in academics, a path of vast intellectual achievement was ahead of me. All this internal bodywork required dedicated hours of practice and certainly did not guarantee me any success in the culture I lived in. The value of the kind of inner body work he was showing me did not reveal itself until a moment of crisis.

After my first year of my Master program at the University of Toronto, I was almost ready to give up⁷. A year had gone by and I had not been able to find a thesis supervisor after meetings with over a dozen faculty members within and beyond OISE/UT⁸. I quickly felt out of touch with why I had come to graduate school and why I was pursuing a new path of inquiry that few around me seemed to be walking on. Every morning I would struggle to wake up and find the motivation to continue reading, writing, and tracking down potential supervisors. The more I would think about what was going on, and the harder I worked to make something happen, the weaker I felt. I was struggling to cope with stress, the headiness of graduate school, rifts in my relationship, and massive uncertainty about my place in the world. I started smoking marijuana almost daily to cope. Reflecting back on this time, the anxious situation in my present dream, of not being in the driver's seat and feeling the urge to thrash my knife about to take away the pain, was a familiar feeling.

Some friends suggested, based on their own experience, that I might find some deep relief and perspective from immersing myself in mindfulness meditation. Their expressions of deeper awareness triggered memories of the flame of that candle, the

7 Some portions of this section are adapted from my Master's thesis: Park, S. (2007). *Inquiry-based Learning as a Complex Adaptive System*. University of Toronto.

8 One faculty member said that my work was too colonial for her. Another 'just wasn't interested.' I got the impression from at least four others that they did not know what I was talking about. I did find one person who was interested in my work and he agreed to take me on. A successful scholar with many connections, I thought I had found an ally. I became concerned when for months on end I couldn't get in touch with him. When finally we could meet, he forgot my name and then proceeded to tell me that he could not be my supervisor because he had a book to write and a world tour to embark upon. I started to learn about the realities of the academy.

feeling of expansion and vibration I felt outside the elevator in that apartment hallway with my dad. Through the practice of insight meditation (*vipassana*) I learned to pay close attention to the direct experience of what is often referred to as the 'conditioned bodymind,' the accumulated, tightly coupled complex of sensations, thoughts, and reactions. I started to see how the mind grasped or tried to push away the stories and sensations that arose and passed away moment to moment. Through sitting and observing my direct experience, I felt an increasing capacity to notice the subtle depths of how sensations in the body were entangled with ideas and beliefs I had about who I was and who I should be. Since my first retreat in 2006, I meditated for two hours a day for a year and half out of a desire to bring more awareness and peace into my life. I attended numerous multi-day silent retreats and vociferously studied as many Buddhist texts as I could. While I did become more aware in certain respects, I also became a passive witness to my inner emotional conflicts and to my body. I could watch and remain calm in the face of difficult and painful experiences, but I was almost frozen with fear about taking action when I was in conflict with others. It was excruciatingly difficult for me to express thoughts that I suspected might be hard for people to hear, even if it was something true to my experience. Unconsciously, I had reified my meditation practice into something that took me out of the world and away from deeper parts of myself that wanted to come to the surface—fears, desires, questions, and longings. I thought I could meditate the pain away. I wanted to be seen as a peacemaker, a mindfully aware person who could speak articulately about the inner world, but inside was messy terrain that I was trying to manage.

Mad Schemes

i sit with hesitation, agitation, and respiration

i do not move

but where is my groove?

this cracking heart i want to soothe

retreat, retreat!

can i hide here inside myself? become technically stealth.

observe sensation, equanimously, impermanently, emergently.

EMERGENCY.

*what does it mean,
this contraction in my being?*

*i sit for hour after hour
and this impulse will not lose its power
i am full of tricks and games
the ability to name
guard and convict in a prison of the academically insane*

*scared like hell to lose my shit
be seen as shamefully illegitimate
self-suppress the messiness
no one will ever guess*

*but god bless, this heart knows
it was taught well by the crows
ka kA KA
ka-razy wisdom
listen deeply, you dance your truth so easily*

*look to the mountain
drink from the sweet inner fountain
mad schemes we be sproutin'
- s. park*

The journey to Vancouver: Detour into vulnerability

I can remember a critical moment in deciding to pursue questions of authenticity and start my doctoral journey. I was attending a conference on Complexity and Education at UBC in 2007. I was finishing up my Master degree and was still seeking a community that welcomed me, supported me, and encouraged my growth as an entire person. Those seeking such things in academia, as I have learned, are crazy to do so. My foolishness persisted and off I went to present at the conference. I remember arriving at UBC after having spent five days in the mountains at a meditation retreat. My

senses were alive, and I was blissed out by the relatively warmer mid-February weather. The smell of damp cedar filled my lungs as I rode a bicycle along the open forested stretch of UBC's endowment lands. After my presentation, I met Dr. Heesoon Bai, whom I had been looking forward to meeting. The MA supervisor I finally found solidarity with, the brilliant Dr. John Portelli, suggested that I might connect well with her.

The image of Heesoon's presence that day still stands strong in mind. Her soft and piercing eyes were looking into the depths of my being, and I felt a vibrant sense of being at the edge of possibility, as if a great awakening might happen at any moment. We talked a bit about our research interests and questions, but in an unspoken way it was apparent that we both were interested in what might be called the 'being dimension.' She suggested that I also get in touch with her partner, Dr. Avraham Cohen, as I would likely connect well with him too. We would talk further.

I left BC to go back home, feeling a mix of ecstasy and a deep ache for something different than what I had in my life back in Ontario. There was an almost desperate sense that, if I did not go for what really felt good about my time out west, I would suffer or squash my growth. Something out here, and more significantly, inside of me, was calling for attention but I did not know what it was. I would resist these calls for almost three more years before I moved to BC in September 2010. I would have a number of other experiences that validated my call to start a PhD at SFU. I went west again a year later and met with Heesoon and Avraham at their house. Avraham, like Heesoon, was interested in who I was as a person and curious about my experiences with meditation, martial arts, and education. The large library of spiritual, philosophical, and educational texts in their living room suggested to me that these folks were at least studying things I was interested in. Their warmth and obvious excitement about being present and connected as multi-dimensional beings brought tears to my eyes. These were rare beings indeed! Following this meeting, Avraham and I worked on a collaborative paper over the course of a year, exchanging emails and writing a dialogue that was subsequently published (see Park & Cohen, 2010). I had not even entered the program and these folks were embracing me!

Another year later, in 2009, I was welcomed by Heesoon to attend the Holistic Education Conference with her outside of Orillia, ON. She suggested that I would find

people of my ilk here. I remember meeting Dr. Celeste Snowber from SFU within the first five minutes of arriving on the grounds of the conference. Dressed in vibrant colours and a large scarf blowing in the wind, she danced her way over to Heesoon and me with a big smile and a wicked laugh. Her bold, playful, and outrageous personality quickly unstuck me from any serious pretense I had about needing to be boring and serious at an academic conference. We decided then and there we would find some time to explore our shared interest in contact dance over the weekend. By the end of the weekend, Celeste and I performed an improvised movement piece with jazz musician and contemplative studies scholar Dr. Ed Sarath to an audience visibly moved by our offering. I was vibrating and ecstatic at what had come out of me—a feeling that reminded me again of my early experience in the hallway with dad. This was the first artistic performance I had ever given, a major surprise to Celeste and everyone else. My move to Vancouver was immanent.

Moving to Vancouver in the summer of 2010 to start my PhD meant confronting some difficult realities about my own wounding and longings. My move west propelled the unravelling and end of a long-term relationship. The process brought to the surface some disturbing realizations about what I really wanted in my life, in a relationship, and my intense fears and shame about being honest and transparent about my feelings to everyone in my life. Grieving and attending to a raw heart was extremely painful as I was put directly in touch with my vulnerability. The burden of upholding a false self, so as to not cause others to feel rejected and view me in a poor light, became too heavy and my only choice seemed to be to surrender. Hiding behind a mask that gave out a sense of a perpetually positive, get-along-with-everyone kind of guy was creating a great deal of misery.

In the wake of grieving the end of the relationship and sitting with questions about who I was, I felt my vulnerability most intensely in my body and my chest. For weeks, the deep pain of heartache brought me to the floor. Instead of going into stories about why the pain was here, what was wrong with me, or what I had to do to make it go away, I somehow allowed myself to really feel it and track it in my body. As I surrendered to the intensity of the energy of the emotion, it began to writhe its way through me body. I cried as I rolled on the floor and felt my body shaking off waves of energy out of my limbs and through the top of my head. The experience was so strange

and I only allowed it to happen when my roommates were not around. However, as I began to speak with close friends about my experiences, I started to see that something powerful and healing was happening for me in the process. For the first time in my life, I was getting a glimpse of what it felt like to cut (as if by a knife) through the grip of shame, fear, and anger. I had a dawning understanding that this release was achieved not through a mental effort, but through the "natural intelligence" (Aposhyan, 1999) of my body to contain, process, and clear emotions that were stuck and buried.

It was also around this time that I became more aware of the explosive material inside that wanted to emerge. I remember vividly one particular experience of anger, an emotional channel I have difficulty being in. During a men's workshop 16 men were encouraged to speak from our experiences about violence. Three parameters were set for the discussion. First, we were free to move around the room as a reflection of our resonance and resistance to what was being voiced. For example, men could move closer to or behind a particular man who was speaking if they felt some solidarity with his perspective. Or, they could move away if they felt they did not understand or like a particular perspective being voiced. Second, we were free not only to speak from our personal experience but also for roles, perspectives, and voices that were missing from the dialogue. Third, we were encouraged to name personal or group edges—places within ourselves or for the group that might be difficult to touch and speak to.

There is a rush of blood across my chest and face. I feel anger rising about the sense of disempowerment I am hearing in men's stories, of the pain in their bodies in relationships with others. I raise my hand and tell the group that I will speak for a role, a voice, that of the inner child.

I move away from the other men and stand my ground. I breathe deeply. "This is my space, this is my territory, and you are not going to tell me what to do, fuck you, you aren't allowed to come in here to take my power from me. What gives you the right to think you know better than I am, to tell me what is good for me? If you come in here and cross this line you are going to pay for it."

I push my arms out, I create a boundary around me. I feel safe and strong here, I feel grounded in being able to say no to differentiate from the group as I begin to

tremble. A man stands up and he says that he wishes he could tap into this space inside himself to take care of his inner child, but he cannot, he is afraid.

The facilitator asks us to come closer to each other and asks him to breathe. I breathe too, I am surprised at what my voice has evoked. I sense the presence of other men witnessing. I ask him what he feels and he says he is scared.

I lay down on the ground, energy is pulsating in my body and I allow it through to the ends of my limbs. I writhe subtly, squeezing my hands and face, breathing, feeling the ground as the group works with this man mirroring back to him his courage to speak.

The voice of the angry and wounded inner child manifested as substantial charge in the body; my loud voice, the standing of ground, the pushing out of arms, and the trembling in my body. Taking up that kind of presence in front of other people was foreign to me and was certainly an edge for myself and the other man. I suspect many of us have an inner child who has been minimized and diminished, first by others and then by an internal authority figure.

Who is this child? If its voice embodied and honoured, what might it say and how might it express itself?

Waking up

The third phase of the dream work process involves integrating the first two steps to create a sense of meaning from the dream. How do the various images, associations, and potential meanings of the dream connect with my life history and current struggles and questions? In retracing my steps, I started to discern that the way forward on the path called for in my dream had to do with looking at the layers of my history, relationships, and experiences. In the description of my workshop above, a question formed around a part of myself that wanted voice and to be included so that I could grow up.

What stands out for me is the resonance between the image of my dad striking the bag with his palm and the knife in my dream. When I first thought of my dad as a martial artist, I could only see what he was capable of on the outside—quick and devastating power for obliterating anything he came into contact with. But as I began to touch the suffering of my own heart and bear witness to the sense of deeper potential being blocked I could start to see that questions about the very core and heart of my life are what the eastern body-mind training paths are ultimately aimed towards. The palm and the knife are expressions of cutting through the distortions that block inner, emerging potentials from reaching their fullest expression. My father's description of his internal experience spoke to the 'natural intelligence' of the body, united with the mind, to bring one's entire being into unencumbered movement. My own journey through coming face to face with my own wounding revealed that my body-mind too has an intelligence capable of transforming obstacles to experience myself in a more integrated way.

Various questions arise in making these connections. What kind of inner work do I need to take up if I am to carve out a space for my own unfolding in my work as an educator, as a husband, and as a father? How can I sharpen my blade and learn to use it to protect this space and cut through the delusion and ignorance that obscures my potential? How are my mind, body, and heart connected in my actions? How might I refine this connection and learn to work with various obstacles to their integration? *What might body-mind training have to offer me in my work as an educator interested in self-cultivation and helping others awaken to their own authenticity?*

In the process of retracing my steps, examining and sharing my dream, I began to see that I was not alone in my dreams. What about those of us living with our hearts trapped in a metal box, repressing and denying what is most deeply felt? Like my parents, and now myself, how might we all start to wake up from the painful conditioning we are inflicting upon ourselves and the world? In the chapters ahead, I continue the dream work process by finding a deeper sense of meaning from my dream that goes beyond the personal. The roots of our distress are not solely individual issues, but are also cultural, social, philosophical, and institutional. Chapter 2 is devoted to articulating the broader context of how our existential cores are shut down and the ways education is implicated in this. In responses to the distress, internally and externally, I write about

how the very images and movements of my dream and my history lead to rituals and actions that concretize the meaning of my dream in waking life. It is in the movements from this internal space out into the world that I come to understand the aims of education. If education (from the Latin *educere*) means to lead from that which is within, to bring to light what is hidden, and to transform the potential into the actual (Assagioli, 1968), how does knowing what is within and how to clear the way to lead from this place as an educator become my work?

Chapter 2 – Affliction and Being

This chapter outlines my understanding of the problems with education that I want to address through my research. I suggest that a number of assumptions concerning human happiness, individuality, knowledge, and consciousness are detrimental to our lives and are rooted in a fragmented consciousness and psychic wounding. This wounding is connected to our earliest years wherein the potential emanating from our existential core or heart has been suppressed and lodged deep in our being.

Five assumptions

Directly perceiving the truth about ourselves reveals an existence animated by the fierce conditions of evolution and the cosmos; birth, transformation, and death of our physical, material being. Life is a raw affair, lived as it is in a body that grows, gets sick, aches terribly, and eventually ceases pulsing and falls apart. What does it mean to know this truth in a way that it is suffused through our experience and in our actions? We are also social and psychological creatures that play with each other, depend on each other, love each other, and deeply hurt each other. We all share a common organ of perception, which you may likely know from your own seeing. Yes, folks, I am speaking about the heart. Our basic needs to be seen, to be loved, and to find an unconditional sense of being at 'home' in oneself and in the world, with others, is all the heart asks. Heartache is here to remind us of how we long to be home and, in a way, we already are.

For most, the suffering that accompanies us in our lives is something we would rather not deal with. It is an inconvenient truth that events in our lives show up and create havoc. Out of a wholesome desire to feel safe, secure, and comfortable, we, psychologically speaking, have crafted a number of strategies and defenses to protect ourselves from the potentially debilitating and life threatening risk of being injured, being rejected by others, or feeling like there is not any meaning to one's existence. I frame these strategies as five assumptions about human experience that are the source of

great affliction, that cuts us off from the heart or core sense of belonging in the world⁹. These assumptions are embedded in many of our philosophies, in our actions, in many parts of our culture and in our institutions.

1. Happiness comes from achieving and acquiring identity, status, wealth, and power. Past a certain point of covering basic needs, a feeling of *lack* becomes an unbearable void that requires endless filling with things that originate outside of ourselves. This is the voice that says I am not good enough, I do not have enough, and I need something outside of myself to validate my existence.
2. Individuals are autonomous beings that are separate from the world and have single, fully (at least theoretically) knowable identities. Viewing ourselves as being in total control of our lives and reducing ourselves and others to stories creates the illusion that we can buffer ourselves from the discomfort of change, uncertainty, and complexity. This is the voice that says I am in control, I am the hero, and I know. Therefore, (if all goes well) I do not need others.
3. The deliberate, rational mind is separate from and more important than the body. Emotion, intuition, and our senses, which are rooted in the body are wild, unruly, and are not to be trusted. This is the voice that says because I can think about and articulate something with language, I understand it. If it cannot be understood logically or rationally, it is suspect and probably not worth knowing.
4. The past has happened and cannot be changed and the future cannot be affected because it has not yet happened. This is the voice that says I am a victim of my parents and my society and I can do little to re-author my story or change course.
5. Light and dark, good and bad are opposites and all that is dark and bad must be disowned and rejected. This is the voice that says that if I acknowledge and give voice to perceptions that are ugly, painful, dark, and 'bad,' I will be hurt or my sense of self annihilated. It is better to ignore or suppress these perceptions so that I can avoid this situation!

My growing conviction is that all of these assumptions and their voices arise from a fragmented consciousness. If you look at each of them, you can see that there is

⁹ These assumptions are a reworking of assumptions that I first came across in one of Heesoon Bai's unpublished course essays for a counselling psychology course.

some kind of binary, a division that is premised on something on the inside being separate from something on the outside¹⁰. The fear, violence, suffering and destruction that follow from these beliefs are crippling. They reduce our lives to a relentless push to stake out our survival against a cruel world. When we live under the five assumptions, access to our existential core, a "sphere of human consciousness which has as its concern the widest possible relationship to existence" (Schneider, 2004, p. 10), is restricted. Feeling the need to break free of this restriction, success in the accumulation of status and wealth may make us immune to the pain and suffering of feeling imprisoned. Operating in this way, the egoic mind, which sees the world in terms of likes and dislikes, becomes our primary compass for deciding who belongs to the 'in-group' and who is to be relegated to the margins or even annihilated. Emotions like anger, being socially unpalatable, become repressed only to explode in violent rage. When we favour comfortable, pleasant, and one-dimensional views of ourselves these views become familiar addictions that require constant feeding.

In the Buddhist literature, these addictions manifest as haunting figures known as *hungry ghosts*. Mark Epstein (2005), contemporary psychiatrist and student of Buddhism, depicts hungry ghosts in the following way:

In the Buddhist cosmology, Hungry Ghosts have a peculiar anatomy. Although they seek nourishment, their mucous membranes are stretched so thin that even the touch of water is painful to their mouths and lips. . . . The Hungry Ghosts have long thin necks and grossly bloated bellies, like pictures of starving children that we see in the newspapers. The act of swallowing is intensely painful. (p. 99)

Hungry ghosts suffer endlessly because their hunger is continuous and can never be satisfied. Hungry ghosts haunt the globalized world everywhere today and we need only look at the state of consumerism. Our consumption level continues to go up, but we are not happier or satisfied than when we have consumed less. This pattern of consumption that does not lead to fulfillment but, on the contrary, leads to insatiableness, which in turn results in harm and destruction to self and others, is commonly referred to as

¹⁰ See Ken Wilber's *No Boundary*. This is one of his earliest works and, from what I have read, is the least pretentious and theoretically convoluted of his writings.

addiction. As I read the list of assumptions I have written above, I am quickly put in touch with the hungry ghosts, addictions and suffering I shared in Chapter 1.

The broader ecology of suffering

My concern with these assumptions and their destructive effects stems from my own experience of suffering with their burdens and in witnessing it in others. I have no doubt that anyone reading the short list I have written above could tell stories of pain, struggle, and addiction of some kind. Equally so, there are our stories of meeting and overcoming struggles and coming to terms with what it means to be awake in the world and to our lives. Far too often, however, both sets of stories are almost never told, written, or created because the vulnerable and intimate spaces required for their telling are largely non-existent. The cause or source of suffering, however, cannot be located solely within the story of the individual. There is a broader ecology that is also part of the picture.

My parents, like so many others, were deeply wounded by their parents as part of a long line of intergenerational trauma. The culture they grew up in was largely unconscious about how we psychologically wound ourselves and others. Physical and mental abuse were normal and, in some places today, still are. We are just now beginning to wake up to how deep the psychological damage goes and we need to understand, first-hand, the workings of our minds, hearts, and bodies, and how they have been wounded, and how they can be healed. The spaces between the core of our being and the rest of existence, of course, are all about relationships; to our parents, to our teachers, to our history, to our culture. It is in this matrix of relationships where the afflictive assumptions I discussed above are conditioned into us and by us. It is in this matrix where they can also be brought to light, disrupted and reassembled, into visions that give deeper meaning to everything on the other side of the boundary lines.

More than any other kind of relationship, it is the one we have with our parents from the earliest days of our life that shapes us the most radically. Perhaps a distant second is our relationship with extended family, school peers, and teachers. Most of us spend 12 or more years in formal schooling and our experiences there are significant to

our formation. They are important normative relationships in that they teach us cultural values, what is acceptable and what is not, and how to think, read, and speak in such a way that we can grow accustomed to living within a various kinds of relational situations (i.e., how we relate to friends, co-workers, strangers, elders, etc.). Parents and schoolteachers are key figures in these relationships because of the responsibility inherent in the role of serving as a guide, model, and instructor to the rites and rituals of the normative process.

Part of what we learn in the norming process and in our relationships is the pain, suffering, and cruelty of life. We cannot always get all of our needs satisfied all of the time. In the onslaught of such distress during infancy and childhood, we develop personalities and behaviours that protect of us from the pain and disappointment of not getting the love, approval, acceptance, and encouragement to be ourselves. We learn how to close the heart. We learn to hide and protect ourselves from the pain of being seen and going unseen for what is at the centre of our being. It happens as a part of fitting in to our social environment—our parents, our teachers, our society—and surviving and managing the pain of being denied some aspect of our experience as we develop.

Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1988), first pioneered by child psychiatrist and psychoanalyst John Bowlby during the mid-twentieth century and backed by decades of empirical research, suggests that aggressive, avoidant, anxious, and disorganized ways of relating to parents, peers, and partners are adaptive responses promoting some level of psychological security (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wal, 1978). Attachment theory says that it is imperative for infants to have a secure relationship with at least one primary caregiver for healthy social and emotional development to occur. Our early experiences form a foundation for our internal models of relationships, our belief systems, expectations, and our self-reliance and self-worth as adults (Mercer, 2006).

Norms and the wound of the unloved

We come to learn to accept these internal models, beliefs, and relationship patterns as somehow unchangeable truths that reflect who we really are. This

conditioning reveals itself through the judgments, comparisons and conclusions we make about our selves and others. 'Not worthy,' 'entitled to,' 'better than,' 'hopeless,' and 'indestructible' are some of the masks we wear and often mistake as our true identities. These adaptations are 'resources' that enabled psychological survival, allowing us to find some fit in a particular family dynamic or life circumstance, and even to grow and thrive to a limited extent in our culture. Our adaptations, however, often arise in response to some kind of wounding or trauma that denied the expression of potential. Schellenbaum (1988/1990) speaks here of the wound of the unloved as "the wound of human existence," (p. 5) a fundamental condition we all share:

Viewed in social terms, the wound of the unloved involves dubious denials, which a human being takes on in apathetically submitting to the rules of family, nation, culture, and religion, rejecting those aspects of human expression society has not accepted. Such enforced submission is then passed on to the next generation, which first suffers, then keeps silence, and finally, like its parents, make [sic] others suffer. (p. 7)

Such denials form the basis of fixed and limited identities. I imagine them as the sutures holding a broken heart together and constraining a soft inner core, dividing conscious awareness from lost landscapes of potential. In my own life, the academic achievement I have acquired by succeeding at the educational game was partly possible because I somehow learned to immerse myself in theories, ideas, and abstraction as a way of blocking out the pain of growing up in a household where it was difficult to express emotions and needs. Somewhere along the way I was convinced that I was mostly an intellectual being with no need or understanding for emotions or bodily awareness. How I felt did not really matter because I could no longer even feel or speak about many of my emotions. My situation was completely *normal*. Being unloved and having our potential denied, Schellenbaum (1988/1990) points out, is normal because:

norms do not affirm important aspects of what is loveable within ourselves and others. Love, on the other hand, is 'abnormal' because it also accepts what the norm denies . . . Faithfulness to norms and lack of love go together. (pp. 8–9)

The norms of formal education and their consequences

Relationships based primarily on norms become breeding grounds for the five assumptions I have listed because they are not based in love. Love, as an expression of inclusion and acceptance of what the norm denies is precisely the dismantling of each of the five assumptions. However, as I point out below, most westernized educational systems tend to privilege certain parts of ourselves over others; thought over emotion; mind over body; 'good' feelings (joy, happiness) over 'bad' (anger, lust), rational thinking over intuitive knowing, movement and productivity over stillness and rest, etc. These forms of privileging, although often seen as normal, are actually detrimental to the development of resilient, healthy persons.

Let us not be mistaken that cultural normalization is still very important because our physical/material survival, connection to a group, sense of self individuated from the world and others, avoidance of harm, and ability to think clearly and rationally are critical to our well-being. There is a degree of satisfaction and stability that comes from learning how to achieve identity, status, wealth, and power in the world. It is important to learn how to take control over our actions, see ourselves as individuals that are different from others, think rationally, and avoid that which is harmful, uncertain, and painful. This is the normalizing function of education.

Normalization, however, is concerned with what a given culture has 'decided,' often unconsciously, what should be ordinary and commonplace, and what are normal human beings. What it does not reveal to us is the deepest sense of ourselves and our possibilities—the *ontological* grounds of being human (Yuasa, 1987). These five assumptions, when embedded in our thought and action as primary ways of being in the world, close us off to fullest dimensionality of who we are and what we might become; the opening to a fluid, multi-dimensional existential core and a participation in a more encompassing communion of beings is prohibited.

What we call 'formal education' is complicit in this prohibition. School was never a place where I was able to reflect upon and learn how to attend to my emotions or resolve conflict with others. When I was young, my parents were so filled with anxiety and worry that I rarely had an opportunity to learn how to communicate and work with my emotions. I learned it was easier to deny or push away the darkness. At school, I

tried very hard to avoid the aggression and anger expressed by my male peers and would find myself silent, broken, and nearly paralyzed when confronted by their violence. I feared fighting and physical confrontation more than anything else. The world inside the classroom was isolating and comforting because it encouraged and rewarded me for living inside my head without ever having to practice working with and transforming how I responded to aggression and anger. The 'zero tolerance' stance my schools took towards violence and aggression did not come with a strategy empowering teachers and students to transform it, but instead it ignored, suppressed, or expelled it along with the students expressing it.

I think we can become so fragmented that those thought to be calm and collected individuals can one day unleash tremendous violence. Kimveer Gill, the young man who shot 19 people and killed one person at Dawson College in Montreal in September 2006, wrote in his online journal before the shooting that 'work sucks . . . School sucks . . . Life sucks . . . What else can I say?" (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2007, n. p.). In a very chilling feature produced by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, his friends and teachers described him as a forgettable, quiet guy, remembered for being unremarkable. He came from a 'good' home, was a 'nice' guy who always stayed under the radar, doing whatever he could to never bring attention on himself. With the exception of a few friends, his parents and teachers were not aware of how serious his psychological state might have been. Although there is no way of really knowing what pushed Gill to walk into a school cafeteria and open fire, one psychologist commented in the documentary that he probably had no way of expressing or dealing with anger and resentment as he grew up.

Zooming out from this specific instance, I am led to a broader question. How can we as educators, parents, and peers be sensitive, connected, caring, capable enough to support ourselves and each other in the face of psychological distress? I am not placing blame on Gill's teachers and parents for not preventing the shooting as the problems of violence in schools are much more systemic. The recent outbreak of public and school shootings across the US and Canada illustrate this. In my own experience as an undergraduate educator working with small classes, I have seen both a desire and a strong resistance to examining our lives with each other and with instructors. I remember one class where I had students write, exercising appropriate self-disclosure,

their personal reactions and feelings to an assignment and speak about it in class if they wished. A young man remarked with angry objection that coming to personal revelations in context of a course is a laudable goal, but his personal life is private and he is not interested in airing his emotional laundry with people he is not close with. The classroom, he told me, was to remain a purely intellectual space, albeit with a spirit of camaraderie in mutual inquiry. I asked him why he was angry and he told me he felt threatened by the other students, who we were willing to write and speak about how the curriculum was interwoven with personal struggles and questions¹¹.

My experiences in most of my other classrooms, however, tend to be on the other end of the spectrum. Many of the undergraduate students I have worked with express gratitude to their peers and me for having a space in their life to discuss the stress and anxiety of being in university, which for some includes various conflicts with parents who have specific expectations of who they should become. Whether this sharing is part of the large group with me or in small groups with each other, these students learn that it is okay to bring their concerns, share them, feel heard and validated by other students, get some opportunities to work with the difficulty internally, and take action towards transforming their situation. I think many of my students have this kind of experience because I am able to offer them a space where they can explore these possibilities in their own way. The assignments invite them to connect their personal journeys with research, reflection, and dialogue. They receive empathic feedback from me as well as encouragement to stay curious when they express despair or frustration about uncertainty, conflicts, and ambiguity. I speak to them about the value of giving mindful, nonjudgmental attention to their distresses and desires and model how this is done through speaking about my own experiences and validating the experiences shared by students. I emphasize that students who are more connected to their inner world are more likely to have the grounding, concentration, patience, and courage to thrive in their academic work, group work, and in virtually all other areas of

11 In another class, a young woman wrote to me that the reflective activities and conversations about her classmates' subjective experiences were not the most enlightening or enjoyable use of class time. She was frustrated and uncomfortable with the idea of sharing personal thoughts or information with the entire class because the classroom is not the best place to do this. She felt these kinds of conversations to be unnatural and difficult to derive any benefit from. The class discussions, in her view, could be better directed with more in-depth discussions about the readings.

their lives. The connection between their inner and outer worlds is expressed through their assignments.

Getting to the roots of normalization

The power and fear of feeling

I believe it helps to share with students the broader forces, histories, and dynamics that shape how we tend to relate to our inner world experience in educational settings and social settings and relationships more generally. The resistance towards and desire for inquiry into our inner worlds needs to be situated. Many of us are uncomfortable and perhaps even terrified about expressing, bringing awareness to, or naming our experience in the classrooms and public spaces¹². To do so is to be vulnerable and classrooms are often places where vulnerability is preyed upon. Bai (2001a) writes that the public space of classrooms is often perceived psychologically as a dangerous place where we must fight or flee. Others represent threats to our success, and if we are unprivileged in some way, we will be “constantly on guard so as not to appear incapable, incompetent, unendowed, lacking in merit, undesirable, and so on” (Bai, 2001a, p. 313). Megan Boler (1999), in *Feeling Power*, points out the old tradition in philosophy, science, and education that creates a good/bad binary—truth and reason on the side of good, emotion and subjective bias on the side of bad (p. xii). Discussing and expressing emotions, particularly in higher education, Boler argues, is typically viewed as ‘unreasonable’ and a ‘faux pas.’

Education acts as a site of social control of emotions, the expression and suppression of which are shaped by dominant moral, scientific, and rational discourses (Boler, 1999, p. xii). The resistance from my student points to how we are socialized to deal with emotions, but it also illustrates another argument made by Boler. These very objections can act as a “mode of resistance—to dominant cultural norms . . . or to the imposition of authority” (p. xv). Indeed, my angry student’s response and others I have witnessed carry strong emotions that contest both my control and my opening of the classroom space to speak what is typically kept hidden.

¹² I point out in Chapter 9 that these students’ responses are also examples of resistance to education being a site of social control of emotions. This resistance is legitimate and needs to be embraced as it represents a marginalized voice in all classrooms.

Megan Boler (1999, p. 22) notes that priests are no longer the only ones in society to ask for confessions: it is educators constructed as "caring nurturers" professing a "pedagogy of love" that become the "caring police." Even Roger Simon (as cited in Boler, 1999), who professes a liberatory pedagogy, admits his agendas about how to change his students: "I want to bring light to your life, to open you, make you grow. I want to change you" (p. 71). As I point out later in this chapter, this agenda is problematic, especially when we as educators are not aware of our own wounding, shadows and edges. The danger is that in not recognizing and attending to our wounding, we can manipulate—overtly or subtly—our students to like us and love us, to see us as good people without dark sides, to be subservient to us so that we may feel in control and intelligent, or to fulfill our sense of worth in the world. Having not integrated certain aspects of ourselves, we are more likely to deny and resist the expression of these parts in others. If I think that feeling angry is bad and not something that fits the image I hold of myself, I am much less likely to be able to respond sensitively and compassionately to a student who is expressing anger.

Rationality versus intuition

People who are quick thinkers, speak articulately, draw from a seemingly bottomless well of factual knowledge, and offer solid arguments, those who seem to 'know' what they are talking about, are revered. As Claxton (2006) reminds us, the Enlightenment privileged rational thought and raised it to a "high art" while those ways of knowing "that were not so clinical and cognitive, and were instead more bodily, sensory, affective, mythic or aesthetic" (p. 48) were swept under the rug and incapacitated. Formal education, which arose out of the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution, effectively institutionalized the development of rational, logical thought as its primary aim. Most of us have been conditioned and shaped through our educational experiences to privilege hard, conscious thinking and to be skeptical of anything that does not have empirical evidence, sound arguments, or logical conclusions.

Intuition is often used as the term to refer to the "loose-knit family of 'ways of knowing' which are less articulate and explicit than normal reasoning and discourse" and "represent[s] the emergence into consciousness (via routes that are not clearly

articulated, and are often faint, fleeting, symbolic or sensory) of hypotheses that are based on the unconscious integration of patterns and analogies" (Claxton, 2000, p. 49). To work with the unconscious and better understand its capacity for intuitive and creative insight, we must be able to tolerate ambiguity, doubt and uncertainty and "be prepared to wait—to resist the desire to end the discomfort of confusion by inducing the birth of understanding" (Claxton, 2000, p. 49).

Intuitive capacities and the ability to bring light to the hidden unconscious are difficult to cultivate in education because the incessant drive to cover curriculum, acquire knowledge, and come up with correct answers leaves little room to daydream, mess about, and basically have time to contemplate without trying to achieve some objective. Levy (2007) points out that although we have new and formidable technologies for investigation and communication, these tools are being used to support a "more-faster-better attitude toward work and life," an attitude that privileges quickly and superficially searching, collecting, and reviewing information over deeper reflection and contemplation on its meaning (p. 248). He suggests that we live in institutional environments where quick turn-around activities have become more valued than the slow ones, a problem of having 'no time to think' that undermines personal well-being and schooling as one of the few places in our world where contemplation and reflection should still be possible.

Commodification of education

Schooling is still rooted in the interests and images of an industrial world that cares little for local context, human spirit, or limits to growth (Gatto, 2003; Noddings, 2003; David Orr, 2004). The current emphasis placed on individual intellectual achievement, testing and grades, and preparation for livelihoods in a materially-oriented society is connected to an instrumentalist paradigm that views human beings as knowledge producers (Willinsky, 2005; Robinson, 2001). The language of production, packaging, and consuming used to characterize our relationship to knowledge mirrors images of a consumerist society (Beck, Cohen, & Falkenberg, 2007). These images and interests are also directly reflected in the accountability, common standards, and standardized testing movement in education, which pushed mechanistic and technocratic visions of curriculum disconnected from the experiences of teachers and students (Portelli & Vibert, 2001). Philosopher Charles Taylor (1991) ascribes these

shifts to the modern disenchantment of the world, the loss of meaning and 'instrumental reason,' the "kind of rationality we draw on when we calculate the most economical application of means to a given end" (p. 5). Authenticity, freedom, and choice are stripped of any moral force or ideal guiding our actions for reasoning that "gets you more of what you want, whatever that is" (p. 21).

Griffin (1995) rallies us to our senses and points out that we cause harm when our systems of education do not acknowledge how our experience may be destroyed when we fail to address the vulnerability and deep potential of the human psyche. We see this failure reflected in the industrial-style of modern western education where

There is no easy posture of receiving. No casual meeting. No subtlety or free play. No sultry slow descent to an erotic knowledge by which, just as one takes in knowledge, one is entered by the known, capsized, transformed. Rather the motion is all swift, driven, edged by anxiety, aimed like a weapon is aimed, aggressive, conquering. Because dominating every effort to know in this terrain is an unmistakable atmosphere of terror . . . Because to know is an erotic act, one is made vulnerable to what has been before unknown; all knowledge enters the self as the force of change. Yet the Western self, ordered as it is around dominion, does not want to submit (Griffin, as cited in Pryer, 2001).

Psychological distress

Responding to research on empathy and moral conduct, Heesoon Bai (2009) speaks of how psychic numbing, our inability to feel the suffering and pain of others, is a result of contemporary consciousness becoming de-animated from our bodily senses. She notes that everywhere, and especially in education, "the abstract, conceptual, logical and symbolic order of the world makes an increasingly larger claim on our consciousness" (Bai, 2009, p. 142), and when our minds are preoccupied and caught up in discursive, habitual thought, we can experience mental and physical exhaustion. This exhaustion leads to becoming numb and indifferent. There is mounting evidence that we are not addressing student mental health and well-being. A growing segment of students in North American public education are experiencing a range of social and emotional problems that are negatively impacting interpersonal relationships, academic achievement, and the development of capacities for becoming resilient and productive

adults (e.g., Greenberg, Domitrovich, & Bumbarger, 2001). Approximately one in five children and adolescents are experiencing mental health problems severe enough to qualify their need for mental health services (Romano, Tremblay, Vitaro, Zoccolillo, & Pagani, 2001).

Objectification

Most distressing is that any form of education that does not cultivate the being dimension of the student—that is, the bodies, senses, feelings, dreams, and existential questions—unwittingly “creates people with objectified consciousness; that is, the consciousness that experiences the self and the world that surrounds the self in terms of objectified ‘otherness,’ or objects (Bai, Scott, & Donald, 2009, p. 324). The conditions for deep intersubjectivity, for feeling and knowing the experiences of each other and for entering into other ways of knowing that go beyond the instrumental are denied. How, in such environments, are educators to deal with psychological distress, existential questions, and the “irresistible content of the classroom” (Portelli & Vibert, 2001, p. 79), the issues such as social inequity, discrimination, poverty, racism, environmental degradation, violence, sex, and success that linger in the shadows of all learning environments?

Having and being

David Orr (2004) sees that “much of what has gone wrong with the world is the result of education that alienates us from life in the name of human domination, fragments instead of unifies . . . [and] separates feeling from intellect” (p. 17). The separation of thought from feeling goes as far back as Plato and Descartes (Bai, 2009). Much of modern schooling, and similarly much of what constitutes the ‘consensus reality’ of mainstream western society, is premised in systems of thought that dichotomize and privilege knowledge over knowing and having over being (Fromm, 1976). The following distinction helps to clarify this point:

Knowledge may, in one sense, be thought of as the outcome or product of an inquiry, whereas knowing, as I defining it, is a process, by which one arrived at or grew from the outcome. *Having*, as in ‘having knowledge,’ requires that something outside of your self can be acquired, owned, changed, and even

transmitted or given to others. *Being* constitutes the embodied and lived integration of experiences within and between persons. To further clarify, this *being* means the capacity to be present in the moment, awake within one's experience and to experience 'being' in a more or less full way. (Park & Cohen, 2010, p. 2)

The perception that knowledge/knowing and having/being are separate creates a schism that denies us the capacity to know the integrated totality of our existential core because the mind, body, heart, and spirit become compartmentalized internally and externally. Outwardly, we have school for the mind, sports for the body, parents and friends for the heart, and religious settings for the spiritual and so on. Such divisions can reinforce those in our inner landscape, divisions that can force heart, head, body or spirit to be privileged over each other in different ways. When the *being* dimension of the persons teaching and learning is not attended to, our 'psychic wounding,' the trauma that results from experiences that have been lost from consciousness and that have become reified (made into concrete existence) and lodged within our being, continues to disturb us (Park & Cohen, 2010).

Chapter 3 – The Lived Curriculum

Much has and is being done to place the being dimension at the centre of the curriculum. Scholars in holistic education have written about the unity and transformation of heart/mind/body/spirit for some time now (Hocking, Haskell, & Linds, 2001; John Miller, 2000, 1999, 1996, 1994, 1985; Ron Miller, 2000, 1990/1997, 1995, 1991; Krishnamurti, 1974, 1953; Kumar, 2002; Montessori, 1948/1973; Nakagawa, 2000). Ron Miller, a leader in the field, suggests that it is out of educating with this sense of wholeness in every aspect of of the curriculum that 'authentic' responses arise from students (Miller, 1995). John Miller, another leader in the field, describes holistic education as one that brings about the transformation of persons, rather than the instrumental transaction of knowledge (Miller, 1996).

Contemplative education (Bai, Park, & Cohen, forthcoming; Gunnlaugson, 2006, 2009; Hart, 2004; Palmer & Zajonc, 2010; Roth, 2006; Zajonc, 2009) is a new field integrating various wisdom traditions and practices into the curriculum as a means of fostering 'mind' (conceptual/abstract intelligence), 'heart' (emotional intelligence), body (somatic intelligence), and 'spirit' (intuitive and existential intelligence) (Gunnlaugson, 2009). I do not have the space to go into the literature here, but I point out that there is currently a growing field of theoretical and qualitative research that examines how various wisdom traditions (i.e., Buddhist, Daoist, Indigenous) and the cognitive, neurological, and psychological sciences can support an enhanced understanding of how the various intelligences above are developed and integrated.

Mindfulness-based education (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010; Solloway, 2012) is also new area of research closely related to contemplative education. Mindfulness meditation practices, drawn from primarily Buddhist contexts, have been adopted in secular forms as a means for experientially increasing awareness of the somatic dimension of consciousness and its relationship to stress, emotions, perception, thought, and judgment (Bishop et al., 2004). There is evidence that skills aimed at reducing stress and developing emotional regulation and empathy can be taught through classroom and school-based interventions (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010). The results of a number of programs are impressive. Mindfulness is linked to improved preparedness, attention, the ability to process information, and academic achievement in

students (Napoli, Kretch, & Holley, 2005); a decrease in stress, anxiety, and depression; support for the regulation of emotional reactions and positive psychological states and; support for creative development, interpersonal skills, empathy, and compassion (Shapiro et al., 2008).

In the field of social and emotional learning, *Roots of Empathy* is a good example of a program addressing the emotional world of students (Schonert-Reichl & Scott, 2009). The program focuses on developing skills for working with emotions in interpersonal relationships in middle school children through inviting an infant and the mother and/or father into the classroom once a month for an entire school year. Sitting in a circle around the infant, the facilitator engages the children (and the teacher) in a dialogue about the behaviours and emotions of the infant. Children learn how to take different perspectives (a cognitive component of empathy), appreciate the difficulties of being a parent, feel and label different emotions in themselves and others, and comfort a crying baby. Research on the program shows significant reductions in relational aggression (i.e., gossiping) and proactive aggression (i.e., bullying) and increases in academic achievement and empathy (in both students and teachers) (Schonert-Reichl & Scott, 2009). The openness afforded to us by being aware of our emotions is what helps us to understand multiple perspectives and supports higher-order cognitive capacities and empathy (Hart, 2008). As Tobin Hart puts it, "self-observation and reflection help to expose and deconstruct positions of role, belief, [and] culture . . . [allowing teachers and] students the conceptual flexibility to see beyond the information given and beyond their own presuppositions" (Hart, 2008, p. 244).

Arts-based research has also addressed issues of embodiment and lived experience in education (Bagley & Cancienne, 2002; Blumenfeld-Jones, 2008; Bresler, 2007, 2004; Cancienne & Snowber, 2003; Eisner, 2008; Knowles, Neilsen, Cole, & Luciani, 2004; Slattery, 2003; Springgay, 2007; Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2005). Springgay, Irwin, and Kind (2005), for example, write about the practice of *a/r/tography* as "a living practice of art making, researching, and teaching" where our lives involve aesthetic encounters in which "the process of meaning making and being are inextricably connected to an awareness and understanding of art" (p. 902). In lingering in "the liminal spaces between a(artist) and r(researcher) and t(teacher)" we can engage in questions that cultivate "emotional, intuitive, personal, spiritual, and embodied ways of

knowing—all aspects of one’s private, public, and/or professional self” (p. 902). It is in the complexity in these many roles and relationships that we dis/un/re/cover ways of being that enable varied responses to our questions. The recently published *A Heart of Wisdom: Life Writing as Empathic Inquiry* (Chambers, Hasebe-Ludt, Leggo, & Sinner, 2012) is a rich exploration of how putting our lives at the centre of our writing allows us to see the critical moments in teaching and learning where lives are changed.

Within specific art disciplines, dance being a good example, attention to the living ground of the artist and his or her inner life has long been a major theme (Adler, 2002; Halprin, 2000, 1995; Hawkins, 1991; Stinson, 2002, 1995; Williamson 2010; 2009). In other fields, including somatics (Johnson, 1995; Hanna, 1988), body-mind centering (Hartley, 1995), and physical education (Chan, 2002; Corbin & McKenzie, 2008; Lloyd, 2011; Myers, 1998; Smith, 2006), themes of inner awareness and vitality are valued over mechanical, linear, and objectifying understandings of the body as components of well-being. Dance is a way of reflecting and deep listening into what Snowber (2007) calls the visceral imagination. In movement we “touch the core” of our emotions and “let loose the spirit within us,” transformative actions that bring the body’s “textures and rhythms” into reflection and language (p. 1453). The works of Snowber and others are particularly important because arts education has “relatively little research and theory relating to the body” and more work is needed to lay a “foundation for an educational theory based in corporeal and intercorporeal experience” and to “advance an embodied paradigm within a postmodern world—a world that challenges grand narratives of being” (Powell, 2007, p. 1083). Within arts *education*, Peter London (2007), in his review of spiritually-oriented arts education, comments that “the spiritual function, power, and contribution of art is rarely taught in the vast majority of our educational systems, finds few researchers, does not appear in teacher preparation courses, and is all but absent in professional literature” (p. 1481). London notes from his own experience and research (London, 1994), and through working with colleagues in the field, that spiritually grounded art teaching is made possible when certain features are present including an intentional community, classrooms free of “teacher aesthetic judgment and comparative evaluations,” the presence of an experimental attitude, and a teacher “who provides close and patient listening, universal empathic regard, and an abiding concern for the whole learner (mind, body and spirit)” (p. 1481). Such environments make possible the perennial questions I opened this dissertation with (Who am I? Who asks? etc.).

There are many absences in my short list of works here. I draw on some of this work and others throughout the rest of the dissertation; however, I want to devote some space to the work of some key curriculum theorists as I find their writings to be extremely helpful in articulating how we overcome the disembodiment and alienation I describe in Chapter 2.

Curriculum theory

Curriculum theorists have been very skeptical of the instrumentalist thinking that divides having from being and mind from body. Canadian curriculum theorist Ted Aoki (2005/1990) warns us of the dangers that come with the language we use to describe curriculum. If we are speaking about curriculum as an instrument we implement, such ways of speaking do not acknowledge the personal, social, embodied, and complex human lived experience. As educators, “we have come to be in the seductive hold of a technological ethos, an ethos that uncannily turns everything virtually into ‘how to do’s,’ into techniques and skills” (Aoki, 2005/1990, p. 369). A more inspired, embodied approach to curriculum would be to take up curriculum as ‘improvisation.’ Like a musician going beyond the scripted performance, improvisation “provokes in us a vitalizing possibility that causes our whole body to beat to a new and different rhythm” (p. 369). This beat and rhythm arises from being “sensitive to the ongoing life and experience of themselves and students in the situation” and “helps us move beyond the hold of instrumentalism of curriculum implementation” (p. 370).

The urgency to attend to the being dimension is underscored by the reality of living in a post-modern world where we face increasing inequality and serious ecological threats to the survival of humanity. Curriculum theorist Patrick Slattery (2006) passionately urges educators to address issues of injustice and take up courses of action that can help us heal and transform the barriers that deny us from recognizing our interconnectedness. He writes,

I believe that education is a prophetic enterprise that seeks justice; curriculum is a public discourse that seeks transformation; and teaching is a moral activity that seeks compassion and understanding. Teaching is not simply a technical

enterprise; rather, it is a creative process of “healing, re-integration, re-membering, and re-collection” (Huebner, 1991, p. 1). Education happens when we are confronted by the other and an image of what we are not, and yet remain committed to what we can become. (Slattery, 2006, p. xvi)

Slattery (2006) argues that it is through processes *deconstruction* that we can probe, problematize, and reposition our perspectives through examining the context, contradictions, absences, cultural, and socio-political relations that have impact on “individuals, cultures, societies, the environment, human and nonhuman life” (p. 3). Malewski (2010) suggests that those of us engaged in this task are invited to celebrate ambiguity and difference as vital dimensions of curriculum. To accomplish this, we need “hybrid spaces” (p. 26) that bring diverse orientations into conversation. Exemplary of works delving into such spaces are Malewski’s (2010) edited handbook on curriculum studies, Eppert and Wang’s (2008) edited collection on east-west cross-cultural studies in curriculum, and McKenzie, Bai, Hart, and Jickling’s (2009) *Fields of Green*. The value of such conversations is that they help us build “connections across fragmentation to build something new without envisioning it as breaking with the old” (Malewski, 2010, p. 27).

Currere and living pedagogy: Towards an embodied curriculum

For the educator, taking up curriculum as improvisation, as deconstruction, and as space of building something new out of the old invites Aoki’s (2000) question: “Where is living pedagogy located?” (p. 1). The grounds of living pedagogy are about the “pedagogic struggles” of improvising “in the midst of the plannable and the unplannable, between the predictable and the unpredictable, between the prescriptible and the non-prescriptible . . . between the curriculum-as-plan and the live(d) curricula” (p. 2). Curriculum theorist William Pinar (2012) offers us a powerful vision of living in this space through a curriculum theory that weaves subjective experience with what one studies. Curriculum theory is “a form of autobiographically informed truth-telling that articulates the educational experience of teachers and students as lived” (p. 35). Pinar sees curriculum as the verb *currere*—a Latin term meaning to run the course. As a method for understanding the relationship between “academic knowledge and life history in the

interests of self-understanding and social reconstruction” (p. 44), *currere* makes curriculum a “complicated conversation” in which we are speaking to each other, to ourselves, to those not present, to those of the past, and “to the selves they have been, are in the process of becoming, and someday may become” (p. 43).

As a lived process interdependent with other people, other parts of ourselves, and the dimension of time, *currere* is “conversation with oneself (as a ‘private’ person) and with others threaded through academic knowledge, an ongoing project of self-understanding in which one becomes mobilized for engagement with the world” (Pinar, 2012, p. 47). We look to our past, our present moment experience, and to our fears and hopes for what we might (not) become. Such looking is “not self-scrutiny for the sake of public performance” but an “intensified engagement with daily life” that is a kind of “*working from within*” (p. 46, emphasis mine). Our subjectivity is what brings education to life and “without the agency of subjectivity education evaporates, replaced by the conformity compelled by scripted curricula and standardized tests” (p. 43). Understanding truth as subjectively informed brings attention to how we can ‘democratize’ elements of our inner experience and thus create foundation for the reconstruction of society. “Autobiography becomes pedagogical political practice for the 21st century” (p. 48)¹³.

Currere and autobiography become vital to the reconstruction of the world and to addressing the psychological distress I have written about in this chapter when the inquiring and storying of our subjectivity and our history becomes allegory. In allegory, Pinar (2012) writes, “*one narrates a specific story which hints at a more general significance*” (p. 50, emphasis in original). William Schubert, another key curriculum theorist, sees *currere* as a way of reconceiving, interpreting, and living our autobiographies:

13 Autobiography as allegory addresses Ron Miller’s (1993) concerns about popular views of holistic thinking and education. He writes that, “a primary flaw in popular holistic thinking . . . [is] its idealist, subjectivist, solipsistic epistemology . . . rather than linking mind and world, subject and object in a larger ecology of meaning (the aim of a genuine holism), this subjectivist holism reduces concrete historical and cultural issues to phenomena of personal consciousness” (Miller, as cited in Nakagawa, 2000, p. 210).

The individual seeks meaning amid the swirl of present events, moves historically into his or her own past to recover and reconstitute origins, and imagines and creates possible directions of his or her own future. Based on the sharing of autobiographical accounts with others who strive for similar understanding, the curriculum becomes a reconceiving of one's perspective on life. It also becomes a social process whereby individuals come to greater understanding of themselves, others, and the world through mutual reconceptualization. The curriculum is the interpretation of lived experiences. (Schubert, as cited in Slattery, 2006, p. 63)

In this complicated conversation, *currere* unsettles understandings of ourselves and others as somehow fixed by the stories written and shared or as representing some "essence of reality" (Aoki, 2000, p. 3) that can somehow be represented and fully known. The sites of living pedagogy, Aoki (2000) reminds us, are situated in the space between representational and non-representational discourses where the known, the unknown, the not-yet-known, and the unknowable dance. Jana Milloy (2005) recognizes how even in writing, we are reinterpreting ourselves and exploring the living space of absence and presence: "The experience of writing is really a re-reading of self . . . In writing the self folds around absences, literally, shapely words, lines curving a space on the page, space that contains nothing, yet reveals something in the movement of writing" (p. 546–547). *Currere* and living pedagogy are in this sense performative acts of inquiry where body, mind, and action are joined in movements that generate "an ever-spiralling circle of creative interstanding" (Fels, 1998, p. 5).

Inter/Embodiment

Read against my narrative in Chapter 1, the works of the authors I have brought forth in this chapter point to a history of disembodiment at the root of the psychological distress, objectification, and alienation in the lives of students and teachers as well as my own life. Revising and reconstituting ourselves and our society through *currere*, through living pedagogy, exposes the root of the assumptions that divide *being* from *having*, mind from body, and feeling from thought to be thread that runs the course of our embodied embeddedness in webs of relations to our other people and to nature. Embodiment is "a web that integrates thinking, being, doing and interacting" (Varela,

Thompson, & Rosch, 1992, as cited in Bresler, 2004, p. 7). To know in an embodied way is to experience the enmeshment of thought, feeling, movement, and existence.

Embodiment is thus “an existential condition in which the body is the subjective source or intersubjective ground of experience” and not necessarily ‘about’ the body per se” but about “culture and experience insofar as these can be understood from the standpoint of bodily being-in-the-world” (Csordas, 1999, p. 143).

Springgay and Freedman (2010) suggest that a bodied curriculum can disclose teaching and learning as a relational, temporal, spatial, and corporeal experience. A bodied curriculum is:

a practice of being oriented to others, to touch, to reflect, and to dwell with others in relation. A bodied curriculum opens up subjectivity to the in-between of corporeality, materiality, and difference shifting the perception of embodiment as universal, toward an understanding of bodies and knowledges as difference. (Springgay & Freedman, 2010, p. 229)

Springgay and Freedman cite the writing of Gail Weiss (1999), who uses the term *interembodiment* to reflect knowledge as being both embodied and mediated by the relationships to other, different bodies which recognize gender, age, personal history, position, and race as crucial mediators of embodied relations as they contextualize embodiment as always a particular, not an abstract universal (Springgay & Freedman, 2010). Embodiment as difference, as autobiographical and allegorical, “underscores the importance of learning to live “with” others, touching not to consume or inhale, but opening up to particularities and possibilities of what each may become” (Springgay & Freedman, 2010, p. 236). In the intersubjective space where bodies meet and touch, an *intimate* curriculum comes to life where there is a deepening sense of the possibility and impossibility of knowing one’s self and the other (Springgay & Freedman, 2010).

This interembodied, intersubjective space, however, is fraught with fears and dangers that disrupt one’s sense of identity and accustomed ways of relating to others. Griffin (1995) uses sexual experience to illustrate our embodied enmeshment with Nature and the fears that come with entering such a space:

As with all experience, sexual experience is vast, not only in its possibilities but in the resonance of even the simplest sensation. Desire, longing, pleasure, passion, orgasm, move the body into states of being which defy all definitions, not only those of gender or sexuality but of the bounded way European culture perceives existence. Moments of a seemingly infinite cavern-like interiority, sensations of enlargement or of dissolving, even decomposition, of engulfing or being swallowed, or merging with energy itself, change itself, breath, air, the lover's body, of becoming sound, light, as well as gravity, weight, stillness. Instant by instant any idea of who one has believed oneself to be is subject to challenge by the knowledge of this experience [...] Apart from any bond or relationship between lovers, in sexual experience an erotic connection to existence is kindled. The spirit is incarnate. (p. 60)

The culturally prescribed divisions between the conceptions of ourselves and our bodies, which we internalize and reinforce socially, deny us access to many of the embodied experiences described above. Susan Griffin (1995) laments that:

this knowledge is prohibited. The experience of incarnation is disruptive to a familiar order of the cosmos. Not only sexual experience but every experience contains within it a dangerous knowledge, the direct revelation of the embeddedness of human experience in nature. (Griffin, 1995, p. 60)

To be with our bodies across the full range for experience is to risk being transformed and having the identities to which we cling be broken: "this is why *being* must be ringed with fear" (Griffin, 1995, p. 60). In the womb and in our first few years out in the world, one is in a profound intimacy with the mother, a relationship of utter dependence. The knowledge of this intimacy is lost upon many of us as we grow up and are persuaded to see self-sufficiency and independence as the ultimate aim of an adult life. If we have not developed a sense of existential security, we suffer like the hungry ghosts who consume endlessly to no avail. We yearn to be accepted, loved, and to belong. However, in denying that we have such a yearning because it can be so viscerally painful, we seek knowledge that distances us from and allows us to control the body and nature.

In bending the world to the power of such knowledge we come to think we can heroically transcend a physical world, a world of pain, life, and death, a world in which we are not in control (p. 77). The result of being separated from the experience of our bodies and emotions, and thus the ground of being, is to be very confused as to who we are. However, to rejoin human consciousness with the body is to "recover meaning within existence that will infuse every kind of meeting between self and the universe" (p. 9).

As I have pointed out throughout these past two chapters, this recovery of meaning is an autobiographical and heuristic process. Autobiographical renderings of lived experience aim to call the reader into a dialogue capable of evoking questions, movements, poetic resonances, and meanings that extend deep into and beyond the particularities of the author as a spiritual being (Bresler, 2007; Cancienne & Snowber, 2003; Pinar, 2012; Snowber, 2009a; 2009b). Spirituality is a "place one can make connections to the inner life, the other, the natural world, to the numinous, but most of all to ourselves" (Snowber, 2007, p. 1450). Dancer and arts educator Celeste Snowber reminds me that:

an act of spiritual practice for an educator and researcher, first and foremost could be calling back the body to a place of honour. Honouring the body's integration into the whole spectrum of growth is the place to begin. (Snowber, 2007, p. 1451)

Knowing with and through our bodies allows us to see that our bodies are matrixes that include "corporeal body, the phenomenological body, the inscribed body, the politicized body, the signified body, the sexualized body—all of which have contributed both to our conceptualization of the body and its relationship to knowledge and to our understanding of how we inhabit our bodies and perceive others' bodies" (Cancienne & Snowber, 2003, p. 238)¹⁴. Celeste Snowber (2002) speaks of the "joy of discovery" that happens when

14 For an examination of the individual, social, and political body as three lenses for mediating arts-based inquiries see Davison, J. (2004) *Embodied Knowledge: Possibilities and Constraints in Arts Education and Curriculum*. In L. Bresler (Ed.) *Knowing Bodies, Moving Minds* (pp. 197-212). Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

her body takes her into "ways of movement/language which go outside my own predictable vocabulary . . . to be surprised by humour, or find an expansion through my spine, or a new place of stillness that is profoundly alive" (p. 27).

The thread that weaves my dream, my early memory with my dad, and the path I took to arrive here is my "body" as a source of intimate knowing and a site of transformation. The body is the matrix that holds all other aspects of consciousness. For example, without the body, emotions cannot be felt or expressed, and without a connection to our sensations, we can become overwhelmed by our emotions. Similarly, the inability to sense the body while thinking can lead us to getting caught up in thoughts, incessant thinking or an inability to bring ideas into action (Brantjberg, 2004 p. 231). More significantly, as Brantjberg points out:

without a body there is no possibility of surviving on earth, meaning no possibility to experience, live, learn, and thereby develop the soul and expand its capacity or consciousness . . . the soul needs the body. (Brantjberg, 2004, p. 230)

Elements of an embodied curriculum

Our bodies are the crucibles and conduits through which we can study our reactions, judgments, and beliefs and work out different ways of responding. Our bodies are a kind of handle for the emotions, thoughts, sensations of our perceptual life-worlds¹⁵; they are matrices for imagining new possibilities and directions in the moment. Philosopher Maxine Sheets-Johnstone calls us to see how our first meanings began in the womb and as infants and children, an apprenticeship of learning "complex details about our kinetic aliveness - about bending, stretching, turning, lifting, opening, closing, and much more" (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999, p. 225). My experiences with my father, my transformation, and my experiences with other teachers show how this apprenticeship can continue. It is returning to bodily movement that we open up the "redemptive possibilities" of the body (Sheets-Johnstone, 2009, p. 22). The living, moving body is

¹⁵ The life-world is a phenomenological term that considers the world as it is experienced in the immediacy of everyday life, rather than in the objective sense of the world disclosed by the physical sciences and mathematics. Phenomenological inquiry and living inquiry show us how the theories and ideas we develop originate from the life-world.

redemptive because it is "always a source of potential surpassing, that is, a source where novelty, no matter how seemingly trivial, is a perpetual possibility" (Sheets-Johnstone, 2009, p. 21). To be open to novelty is to be vulnerable and curious about what emanates from our existential core.

When I pay mindful attention, I am amazed at how many new overt and subtle ways my body moves, even when I try the same movement pattern over again. The breath is different, the light in the room has somehow changed, or my weight is now more slightly forward—all giving a fresh take on the experience of my movement. The meaning of my movement, for it to be an expression of a heart-ful relation to the world as it is in this moment is to not "orchestrate" and "conduct" the experience as an objective "third-person body" (Sheets-Johnstone, 2009, p. 22)¹⁶. To inquire in an embodied way

16 Merleau-Ponty (1962) shared with us the insight that "every perception is a communication or communion . . . a coition, so to speak, of our body with things" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 30 in Denton, 2005, p. 764). Abram (1996) speaks about this communion in terms of the perceptual reciprocity the bodymind has with the world. We have a body that "is not a programmed machine but an active and open form, continually improvising its relation to things in the world...[relations that] are never wholly determinate, since they must ceaselessly adjust themselves to a world and a terrain that is itself continuously shifting" (p. 49). Becoming conscious to the interpenetration of mind, body, and soul invites us to feel into the adjusting, shifting, transitions and hinges of the in-betweens of moment-to-moment experience where meanings are recovered, discovered and infused.

This view of the mind-body relationship is critical to envisioning creative ways of addressing the fragmentation of consciousness. Francisco Varela, a cognitive scientist who contributed immensely to the dialogue between Buddhist psychology, cognitive science, and phenomenology, points out how much of western philosophy views rational, deliberate willed action as a way of shaping our behaviour. While the thinking mind is important, it is our 'immediate coping', our mere occupancy in life, that shapes most of what we actually do (Varela, 1999). We get up in the morning and put our socks on without thought given to how to do it because we have done it so many times—this is our embodied know-how. Immediate coping is the real 'hard work' of cognition as it took the longest evolutionary time to develop; rational analysis is a relatively new addition.

Varela suggests that our responses to everyday situations form spontaneously from the repertoire of past experience. This creates a "readiness-for-action" or microidentity in response to each situation or microworld we experience. It is the embodied immediacy of each microworld that spontaneously brings forth microidentities. For example, when someone makes a subtle motion towards me that suggests a strike might be coming my way, my body tends to jerk to attention and my arms go up in front of me to brace against an attack. The action is automatic - it is both instinctual and learned from past experience. There is no way of completely stopping and removing ourselves from immediacy to make an evaluation of an act's intent and consequences so that we may then go into action. The bodymind has set itself up to act in a particular way before we are even aware of what is happening.

We are constantly transitioning between microworlds and microidentities, continually arising and

that puts us in touch with the heart is thus "to forego, at least for a time, a world of self-made empirical certainties" (Sheets-Johnstone, 2009, p. 22).

Any model, theory, idea, or conceptualization of curriculum must come from my movements, my gestures, from the experience first, and also in the return to movement and experience. It is through corporeal turns wherein we are called be mindful of and bear witness to the phenomenon of the stillness/movement of self and world (Sheets-Johnstone, 2009, p. xviii). This turn toward the experience of the movement of my body also involves reflecting on the experience and to contemplate "the nature of animation" so that we may glimpse the source of the "qualitative play of forces that constitute our own movement and the movement of all living forms" (Sheets-Johnstone, 2009, p. xviii). This knowledge of what animates does not deny language and the corporeal turn also invites us to put movement into words, images, and symbols "that are phenomenologically consonant with the dynamically resonant kinesthetic and kinetic experiences they are." (Sheets-Johnstone, 2009, p. xviii).

To animate an embodied, living curriculum, Denton advises that "we need a different interpretive domain that is not guided by an intellect that has not been transformed by direct inquiry into human experience, that goes beyond ego, thought, self" (Denton, 1998, p. 32). In other words, we cannot expect a wounded mind conditioned by dualistic assumptions to lead the way forward. To engage curriculum in ways that are responsive to the movement of the existential core is to no longer "perform a radical surgery upon myself such that a vibrant kinetic reality is reduced to faint and impotent pulp . . . [nor] deny what I experience myself to be: a mindful body, a body that is thinking in movement" (Sheets-Johnstone, 2009, p. 32).

Vitality

passing away, moment to moment. Some transitions, like walking from the kitchen into the bedroom, are barely perceptible whereas winning the lottery will represent an overwhelming transition. Varela thinks of these transitions as "hinges that articulate microworlds" (Varela, 1999, p. 11). They are where our moment-to-moment experience is assembled and dissolved. These hinges, the in-betweens, are where creativity and freedom are borne. They are the sites where we glimpse the immediacy of our interpenetration with the world and the mysterious source that animates our movements, our lives, and the possible ways of being in the world.

The kind of “core training” I am advocating here has been expressed by Smith and Lloyd (2006) as the cultivation of one’s *vitality*. Vitality “is feeling alive, innervated, animated, and invigorated in specific postures, positions, gestures, motions, and expressions of the body” (p. 250). As something rooted in our corporeality, vitality “is a motor perception long before it is a curricular conception” (p. 250). However, rather than purely a product of mechanical forces Smith and Lloyd describe vitality as an animating force that involves enthusiasm, spirit, motivation, and mindful intent. “Enthusiasm,” they write, “means etymologically to be filled with the spirit of God, is profoundly about inspiration, respiration, and the transfer of energy that comes with the very materially and substantially breathed ether that we nowadays call “fresh air.” (p. 253)

In Asian cultures this energy or animating vibration is referred to as *qi*, *ki*, or *prana* and manifests through the particular presence of a person. Chinese actors have a way of describing good actors as having radiating presence (*fa qi*) whereas poor actors would be considered to have no presence (*meiyou qi*) (Riley, as cited in Zarrilli, 2009, p. 19). Our existential core, being a fluid center, is not a psychologized self but something more alive and animating. The original Greek meaning of psyche is familiarly understood as the human soul, but also “the mind...considered as an organic system reaching all parts of the body” (Aposhyan, 2004, p. 4). The animated, organic body is activated and invigorated by the energy of the breath and Zarrilli (2009, p. 19) notes that the Greek *psychein* means “to breath”. This connection to breath is directly reflected in the Chinese character for *qi* (氣), which has two parts: steam (气) rising from rice as it is cooked (米). *Qi* is not simply the breath and the blowing of steam but also alchemical process of cooking some thing difficult to digest into something that has refined nourishment and energy (Bai & Cohen, 2008). There is a connection between matter (or bodies) and our vitality and that:

By undergoing training in specific modes of embodied practice, this energy associated with breath and its accompanying force or power enlivens and quickens one’s awareness, heightens one’s sensory acuity and perception, and thereby animates and activates the entire bodymind. (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 19)

Vitality blocks and creativity

The cultivation of our vitality or life force is hindered by what Smith and Lloyd (2006) call vitality blocks. Vitality, they suggest, is largely described in health and physical education as numeric and mechanical representations of “cardiovascular capacity, muscle strength and endurance, flexibility, and body composition” (p. 251). Vitality is taken to be a medical and scientific conception that can be accurately measured and managed through prescribed, rote movements. Body awareness in many exercise regimes is concerned with following set movement routines that can get the heart pumping and brow sweating, but pay no attention to the “emotive, “lived body” that is capable of perceiving, sensing, and feeling vitality (p. 254). Again, we see the same dichotomy I referred to earlier; *having* the knowledge about how to move the body is privileged over the *being* that animates the movements.

As much as I want to honour the wounding and conditioning we all carry and the value of inner work on addressing it, I am aware that many of us in the westernized world are good at talking about the problems we face. I think this can be another kind of vitality block. Reading the headlines each day it is easy to see the various difficulties humanity faces and the scores of opinions, perspectives, and research that locates blame on a host of causes: capitalist greed, inequality, discrimination, colonization, lack of mindfulness, poor parenting, underfunding, egoic defences, structural corruption, partisan politics, and so on. I don't want to diminish the very real and detrimental impact these factors have on creating distress. Theodore Adorno cautions us that to ignore these issues would collapse *authenticity* into a "jargon" that would deny the dialectic between object and subject and collapse consciousness into "mere self-experience, or an absolute idealism" (Adorno, as cited in Kreber et al., 2007, p. 34). However, whether we focus on attending to the inner world as a way of transforming the outer world or vice versa, there can be a propensity to get stuck in the talking about the problem. As I alluded to in the previous chapter, we are saddled with a host of assumptions about human experience and an over-reliance on thinking, problem-solving, and rationalization that prevents us from accessing other ways of knowing.

James Hillman suggests that we are "victims of academic, scientific, and even therapeutic psychology, whose paradigms do not sufficiently account for or engage with, and therefore ignore, the sense of calling, that essential mystery at the heart of each human life" (Hillman, 1996, p. 7). Trauma-based views of personality and development

currently dominate psychotherapy and much effort is placed on attachment-based approaches that try to remodel parent-child relationships, offering security and trust. What of the other part of our childhood, the part Hillman calls the passion for the extraordinary? Does the creative journey of the soul and the guidance of *daimons* still have relevance today or have we evolved from such naive romantic notions into a more sobering and objective view of human consciousness? How do the images like the knife in my dream and childhood memories like my witnessing of my father's striking palm give us direction and meaning?

The question about re-creation is important because of our tendency to get stuck in the problem and re-traumatize ourselves. I could continue to go on with a tirade of critiques about the rotten foundations of education and my own limitations, hindrances, and woundings but to continue to frame them as problems leaves little room for shifting the storyline. It's important to tell our stories, make correct diagnoses, and gain an accurate sense of how we arrived where we are, but our lives are not static and there is a danger in becoming addicted to the way these stories placate the uncertainty and mystery of what lies at the core of our being. If we cannot find ways to break our addiction to pathological categorization, rational explication, and theorizing, which are attempts to reduce uncertainty and the fear that comes with it, we cannot allow ourselves to be who we are while simultaneously becoming other than who we are (Straehle & Soucar, 2002)¹⁷.

17 Do not mistake me for being an anti-theorist. Having a deep base of theoretical knowledge is considered a primary marker of professionalism by educators, counsellors, other human service professions and the public (Drapela, 1990). Good theories help us understand the inner world and behaviour of ourselves and our students and grasp the interpersonal and systemic relationships that shape and are shaped by the individual. In a counselling context, as in education, "without a clear understanding of what is happening in the intimate, private world of clients, the counseling practitioner will flounder—unable to make an intelligent judgment as to which counseling skills or techniques to use for a particular client in a given set of circumstances" (Drapela, 1990, p. 21). Theories illuminate the role of the counsellor and the attitudes, skills, and techniques needed to operationalize a particular understanding of human change. Without theory, we would miss out on the groundbreaking work of other therapists, educators, artists and scholars who have transformed the field. Rather than "reinventing the wheel", counsellors and educators can devote their attention to "developing our own operational framework" (Drapela, 1990, p. 24).

I believe the same need for theory to be true for educators, especially novice educators because they have yet to develop a mature practice, and, especially in the early stages of training, they benefit from principles, practices, techniques and classifications that help make sense of and predict how students respond to various lessons and activities. Teaching practice is difficult,

A certain kind of energy is required to break up and metabolize the assumptions and condition that obscures our existential core. As I alluded to in the previous chapter, it is with the generative capacity of our existential core that we can cultivate the potential energy needed to be whole in our actions in the world. One reading of potential is as *power*, which comes from the Latin *potential* and is closely related to the Greek *poieisis* ('to make,' 'to create'). We need power to make or create something. But where does this power come from if we are cut off from our existential core?

Kates (2005) writes that:

To create is to transform; but the basic issue is what is being transformed. It may be raw materials (clay, wood, words, pigments, or the patterns of social behaviour) to which a more integrative and meaning-realising form is given; but it also could be the consciousness of human beings and their capacity to respond effectively to the challenges of a greater life. (Rhudyar, as cited in Kates, 2005, p. 194)

The raw material we have to work with is ordinary experience itself—the fears, sensations, movements, dreams, joys, stories, and perceptions that imbue experience. Life is auto-poetic, creating itself from itself (Maturana & Varela, 1992) and so in paying attention to our dreams, our fears and desires, and the impulses and images within we can begin to hear the call of the soul and glimpse its power for re-creating our lives¹⁸. This kind of attending is referred to by Karen Meyer as *living inquiry*:

Collin (1996) points out, because it can only be learned in specific contexts and thus theoretical-oriented teaching is an easy place to begin. Once in practice, theory offers the basis for assessment, problem-solving, use of interventions, and the skills and attitudes needed to respond to a student; this is competence and is essential for having confidence in one's ability as a professional. Exposure to and fluency in the theories and techniques across the field is part of the foundation that practitioners need to create the conditions for growth with students; this is our competence with the terrain of the known and the familiar.

18 Becoming aware of and developing the energy that bubbles forth from the existential core is a way of restoring our 'right inward measure,' something Kabat-Zinn (1990) discusses in context of the connection between the words meditation and medicine:

the words medicine and meditation come from the Latin *mederi*, which means 'to cure.' *Mederi* itself derives from an earlier Indo-European root meaning 'to measure' . . . But the concept of 'measure' has another, more Platonic meaning.

a practice of inquiry into being-in-the-world. It concerns care of oneself in the world. Living Inquiry encompasses how we experience our everyday worldliness in everyday living and what awareness as a clearing brings before prejudiced eyes. (Meyer, 2010, p. 1)

The inquiry itself is a deepening into directly perceiving *what is*¹⁹. By reframing our difficulties, edges, limitations and constrictions as raw materials with energy, we can create new meanings. Putting the vibration that quakes up through our fears into poetry, images, sound, and movement creates a space to witness new possibilities. Acts of creation are vital to knowing the heart of our lives because they “teach us the secret of self-re-creation so that each time we fall, or like Humpty Dumpty are pushed off the wall, we can reconstruct the shape of our reality” (Kates, 2005, p. 198).

My contribution

If it is the *being* of the human that puts knowledge into action, attending to the *being* dimension of the student and the educator is paramount. Such attending is a pedagogical act because “the translation of knowledge into action is what education is for and what pedagogy is about” (Bai, 2001b, p. 87). My capacity to use knowledge to take action in the world requires engaging in learning and acting with my entire *being*. What does this mean, though, to learn and engage with all of myself – mind, body, heart,

This is the notion that all things have, in Bohm’s words, their own ‘right inward measure’ that makes them what they are, that gives them their properties. ‘Medicine,’ seen in this light, is basically the means by which right inward measure is restored when it is disturbed by disease or illness or injury. ‘Meditation,’ by the same token, is the process of perceiving directly the right inward measure of one’s own being through careful, non-judgmental self-observation. Right inward measure in this context is another way of saying wholeness. (p. 163)

19 Creating and sharing field notes supports immersion into listening to the what is that is ever-emerging. Field Notes involve inscribing and sharing thoughts, feelings, sensations, images, emotions, dreams, etc. that arise in our ‘being-in-the world’, our ‘worldliness’. There are four existential themes as part of the inquiry: 1) Place—physical and social textures, where we go, where we find ourselves, where we live; 2) Language—mediums for thinking, speaking, expressing, and interpreting the “spoken, the unspeakable, and the silence of the unsaid” (Meyer, 2010, p. 1); 3) Time—horizons of past, present and future; and 4) Self/Other—considers how we are both, how we make discriminations, and an awareness of being aware.

spirit, soul, etc.? While the literature I have cited above goes a long way to address this question, I feel a desire to connect and integrate many of the ideas, modes of inquiry, and practices highlighted in this body of work in a way that directly addresses by my own wounding, shadows, and vulnerability and actually transforms me in some way as an educator. This kind of work, as an academic and personal project, is difficult for me because I expose parts of myself that are painful and that most of us would rather keep private. However, I see an opportunity in this work to bridge a number of different worlds—the contemplative and the artistic, the inner and outer, the academic and the personal. In the next chapter I start to unfold why attending to my wounding from these different and complimentary approaches is essential to cultivating the vitality, creativity, and on-going growth of the educator.

Chapter 4 – The Wounded Educator

Disrupting the assumptions that deny me a deeper understanding of who I am and accessing my fullest potential means *working with* how my own perceptions, ways of thinking and identities have been conditioned. Physician Michael Greenwood (1997) wisely observes that:

More often than not, there is no particular answer to the question of "cause" [of chronic symptoms] because it is really the wrong question. Once we understand and accept that illness is part of ourselves, there may be no way to separate its "cause" from the illness, nor the illness from us. In other words, when dis-ease is disease, and disease is dis-ease, we are chasing our tails to ask "Why?" Rather than search for cause, then, better questions might be "Who am I?", "Why do I hurt?", or "What are my symptoms trying to tell me?" After all, if we do not know who we are, we have little chance of knowing why we are sick. (p. 19)

When I look deeply inside, I see the world. Thich Nhat Hanh, referred to by his students as Thay (1987) shares with us that:

The kind of suffering that you carry in your heart, that is society itself. You bring that with you, you bring society with you. You bring all of us with you. When you meditate, it is not just for yourself, you do it for the whole society. You seek solutions to your problems not only for yourself, but for all of us. (p. 47)

As an educator, Thay's point about the inter-connectedness of all beings calls me to reflect on how I bring the conditioning and wounding of the relationship with my parents, my culture, and my society with me into the classroom. I remember one course years ago where a desire to be liked by *all* of my students unconsciously interfered with my ability to deal appropriately with a situation involving two students. They had dated for a number of years, were recently separated, and both wanting to take my course. They asked me if I thought that it would be a good idea for them to both take the small seminar course with me. Each of them said that they felt capable of working through their personal issues with each other. I chose, however, to ignore the underlying emotion I sensed from the woman that she would not feel safe in the classroom with her

former partner. I made the decision to allow them both in because I was keen to have students take my course and learn from me.

The course experience ended up being quite difficult for the woman as she continuously felt triggered by her partner and the atmosphere of the seminar course was heavy as I attempted to contain and placate her emotional reactivity. I did not recognize it at the time, but the situation mirrored issues in my own personal life at the time where I felt unable to acknowledge nor express my pain around wanting to be loved and seen as a good person. I feared being unfavourably viewed by others for exposing my pain. The ring of fear around trusting my own wisdom was so tight that I was numb to the suffering it was causing myself and others, especially those in my most intimate relationships.

The above course experience, along with a number of others, led me to question how deep, unconscious, and unresolved issues in myself were impacting my teaching. I started to think that seeking transformation, resolution, or peace with my inner conflicts would benefit not only me, but also the students I work with.

Educator and author Parker Palmer (1998) writes about his own wounding and how he felt a “constant contradiction” between how he experienced himself and how other people viewed him, a contradiction that “created a painful, sometimes crippling sense of fraudulence” (p. 28). He says that in his teaching he could remain coolly detached behind his theories but he eventually came to see that he was projecting his fear and sense of fraudulence out on to society and his students. Palmer, like all any of us might, avoided going into a direct dialogue with his fear.

The covering up of feelings of ineptitude, unpreparedness, and being not worthy become the “lessons” in a hidden curriculum (Giroux & Purpel, 1983) that students learn from educators. I may have taught the woman in the classroom that it’s better to follow the advice of the instructor than to trust her felt need for space and safety. Palmer (1998) writes that “as I teach, I project the condition of my soul onto my students, my subject, and our ways of being together . . . teaching is a mirror to the soul” (p. 2-3).

Becoming aware of how this mirror works can reveal to me all the ways in which my perceptions of myself and others are distorted and obscured. Palmer (1998)

suggests that how an educator diagnoses “students’ condition” determines the remedy offered (p. 42). However, most educators are crippled in understanding their condition “when we deny our own condition, [because] we resist seeing anything in others that might remind us of who, and how, we really are” (p. 48). His famous statement that “we teach who we are” reflects his conviction that the self of the educator is the source of good teaching, not the *what* and *how* to teach.

Yes, “we teach who we are” and “that is the problem” (p. 28) adds Avraham Cohen (2009) because it often turns out that we teach who we think we are and end up teaching who we are not. Without personal, direct, and developed capacities to work with our inner worlds, the conditioning and wounding that is present in us and in the classroom festers or becomes stronger. I need to find ways to keep polishing the mirror that connects inner and outer. If I have not looked deeply at what blocks my own life force or existential core from expressing itself, how can I feel, think, create, and act my way into our supporting the fullest development of the learners in my midst? Is it not impossible for me to encourage awakening with those that I teach and learn with if my senses are dulled, my moral sensibility blunted, and my mind and heart asleep?

Inner Work

Educator and clinical psychologist Robert Romanyshyn (2012) asks “how do we make a place for the wounded educator?” (p. 103). These wounds are parts of our unconscious life. Educators need to address the unresolved psychological issues and distorted perceptions of themselves because they may understand themselves in more intimate ways and reduce negative impacts on their own development and that of their students.

Cohen (2009) suggests that teaching and learning environments become more healing and creative the more we acknowledge, respect, and celebrate the complexity of our personal histories and the growth potential of everyone involved. I believe our work as educators is to help students see their personal histories as a resource for creating knowledge, our communities, and our lives. Our survival strategies, habits, conditioning, and deeply held beliefs are like trees with deep roots in the forest. The trees contain and structure the flow of energy through the woods and if a forest is to regenerate and

diversify, some of this energy needs to be liberated through processes including burning, decomposition, decay, and composting.

Like any particular ecological zone on the planet, our personal histories are constrained by the limits of context. For trees, it is the quality of the soil, the amount of light, the presence of other species, and so on. As humans, we have particular physical, financial, psychological, relational, and cultural constraints. The ways in which we grow, adapt, and recreate the environment and ourselves depends on how we use these limits as opportunities.

All of us are limited in some way and compassionately coming to terms with everyone's suffering involves acknowledging, respecting, and celebrating everyone's particular constraints. Paradoxically, such a process is liberating. When we are not treating unfavourable inner and outer conditions as garbage, we can gain insight into the ways we manipulate others and ourselves to avoid feeling a sense of lack and unworthiness. Cutting through these delusions liberates energy in us, through us, and between us. Transforming obstacles to the expression and unfolding of our fullest potential thus involves addressing the conditioning that denies certain parts of histories, limitations, and potentials from seeing any light.

Enlightenment, as a pragmatic light-shining and mirror polishing project, does not have to happen out in the open for all to see. Occasionally we may need colleagues, supervisors, therapists, artists, partners, and friends to help us express and see our experiences from different perspectives. However, as I start to unfold in the coming chapters, much of the process is "internal" and involves making conscious choices about how to work with various sorts of subjective phenomena including judgments, feelings, intuitions, and sensations that arise in us. Each of us is responsible for attending to the wounds and shadows we carry.

It is not the content of my particular suffering transformation that's important to addressing the more collective alienation and disembodiment I wrote about in Chapter 2, but the processes educators and students can take up in service of their awakening. Taking up inner work leads educators to become better educators. I wholeheartedly agree with Avraham Cohen (2009) who says that the best educators are those engaged

in bringing their deepest callings into work and life, dwell at the edge or past the cultural consensus reality, help others realize their potential, and have a clear sense of their own humanity. These kinds of educators can "identify experientially and conceptually what is occurring in the moment in the classroom and within himself or herself, be able to derive some meaning from this, and be aware of his or her inner responses, as well as be able to respond in ways that fit in both the inner and outer worlds of themselves and students" (Cohen, 2009, p. 4).

Developing these abilities is about training to be ready for anything that arises in the moment and to be creative and compassionate in working with personal and group edges. Edges are restrictions in thought, feeling, and action, and are felt as "the experience of not being able to do something, being limited or hindered from accomplishing, thinking, or communicating" (Arnold Mindell, as cited in Cohen, 2009, p. 69). They are "resistances to recognizing, allowing, and living certain disavowed parts" of ourselves and of groups (Arnold Mindell, 1992, p. 33). Attending to the here-and-now of the classroom, being present to one's internal state and to students is not merely a matter of remaining open and curious, but also of directing attention to features of awareness that assist us and our students in becoming apprentices to the moment and creating containers for dialogue and group experience that allow everyone to have an awareness of being at the edge of living pedagogy where the tensions between what can be represented and known and that which is still unknown and absent are most alive (Aoki, 2000). Such attending is not easy, especially concerning topics that are considered taboo, deal with unmet needs (e.g., to be seen, heard), or address parts of ourselves that have been hidden or repressed. Yet it is precisely because we so often fail to speak about our edges that we reinforce their status as other, alien and therefore something we must fear. What, therefore, is actually involved in being fully present in the classroom? What does it mean to work skillfully with difficult edges? What does inner work look like? What is it like to experience teaching as an art of perfecting one's being?

Authenticity

As an educator, I think about the impact of my relationship with students on learning both content and about ourselves. How is it that my capacity for encouragement and authenticity connects to a lively and supportive classroom environment? How does acknowledging the force of this capacity transform instrumentalist views of curriculum, conceived as questions of best techniques, proper management, and objectively demonstrable outcomes that conform to a partial view of the human experience? Palmer (1998) cautions that “as important as methods may be, the most practical thing we can achieve in any kind of work is insight into what is happening inside as we do it . . . technique is what teachers use until the real teacher arrives” (p. 6). bell hooks, an educator who writes about education as liberatory and transgressive, observes that during her two decades of teaching, students want to see their professors as “whole human beings with complex lives and experiences rather than simply as seekers after compartmentalized bits of knowledge” (hooks, 1994, p. 15).

I think part of the problem is that notions such as the whole, authentic, or soulful educator remain “only vaguely understood” and thus it is presently “not feasible to articulate a persuasive rationale for why we should be concerned with the phenomenon [of authenticity] in the first place” (Kreber et al., 2007, p. 25). There are good reasons why we should be sceptical of authenticity as it is commonly understood in the modern world. Charles Taylor (1991) points out that the term has come to refer to the self-indulgent, relativist perspective where everyone is allowed to have his or her opinion and where we should not impinge upon anyone else’s perspectives. We find here a ‘moral subjectivism’ where “moral positions are not in any way grounded in reason or the nature of things but are ultimately just adopted by each of us because we find ourselves drawn to them” (p. 18). Authenticity, in this view, means that we can do whatever the hell we want, including ignoring our past, the suffering of others, our duties as citizens, and the environment.

Like Taylor, I believe that authenticity is a moral ideal that includes more than just the self in its sphere of concern. As I pointed out in Chapter 1, the damage caused to ourselves and others stems from denying our multi-dimensionality and our intersubjectivity with others and nature. To live what Heidegger referred to as an authentic existence “involves confronting the truth, opening oneself up to one’s own limited possibilities, not being defined by societal norms, and not clinging to comfortable

routines" (Kreber, et al. 2007, p. 31). Heidegger argued that it is intrinsic and inescapable for humans to not always pursue truth and live the superficial reality of everyday assumptions. Indeed, defending our sense of self and getting the acceptance of others is an effective short-term psychological survival strategy. However, dominated by the familiarity and attachment with our masks, we live inauthentically when we deny our mortality. The truth is that every one of us comes into and out of being. Our bodies are made from the earth and return to the earth. Authenticity is about how we come to terms with these realities here and now.

Soul and the Original Face

Some traditions use the word *soul* to describe both the immanent and transcendent dimensions of human existence. Deborah Orr (2005) considers the word *soul* as a "linguistic marker for human being holistically understood" (p. 87). Soul, she argues, is not a substance, thing or entity, but a continuously changing potential that is co-created by the web of relations with other human and non-human beings (Orr, 2005, pg 93). Body, mind and other dimensions of the human being hinge upon this holistic sense of the human being because body and mind are "conventional and provisional ways of speaking about aspects of the human, and not names of independent and separate entities which are somehow conjoined to form a person" (Orr, 2005, p. 87).

There is a saying in the Zen tradition that we need to look to the moon, rather than the image of the moon reflected in the water. One interpretation of this saying is that we should not confuse the names, concepts, and signifiers for the things themselves. The terms being, mind, body, heart, self, soul, etc. are signifiers that can direct attention to some aspect of reality that is without a name. Orr refers to Wittgenstein's language games to show that while we can use words to refer to actual things, it is pre- and nonlinguistic behaviours and human interactions that offer a "way of thinking" that serves as the basis for language use (Wittgenstein, as cited in Orr, 2005, p. 91). Orr cites Wittgenstein's example of how we acquire the word pain: "A child has hurt himself and he cries; and then adults talk to him and teach him exclamations and, later, sentences. They teach the child new pain-behaviour (Wittgenstein, as cited in

Deborah Orr, 2005, p. 91). The web of relations—the dynamic, living contexts of our experience—give us the basis for the development of language.

David Abram (1996) makes a strong argument for the ways in which development of literacy and the written word have drawn our attention away from the senses and our connection to the natural world, thus making it difficult for us to notice that we are mutually constituted by the web we weave with other beings—human and more-than-human. Words such as authenticity and soul ring hollow when we cannot see how we are constituted by relationship and relating to something outside of ourselves. Another way to approach this idea is to consider a question asked in Zen Buddhism: ‘what was your ‘original face’ before your parents were born?’ The original face is the non-duality of subject and object, self and other, and the mother and father interpenetration that created life. The original face is the inter-dependent nature of our being with everything else. To use the mirror metaphor again, the original face is what we see when the blemishes and distortions have been all been removed.

Why does authenticity matter in education?

Authenticity refers to the way the total self of the educator shows up. This self includes surface, conscious parts and the hidden, unconscious parts. Laursen (2005) reckons that “the personal quality of a teacher in the classroom is experienced as a unified whole by students and not as several ‘sub-competences’ or aspects” (p. 203) and therefore authenticity is helpful for pointing to this quality. Palmer (1998) uses *integrity* to refer to the ‘wholeness’ that is found amongst the forces that shape and change the self. Our ability to have integrity corresponds to the ways in which we embrace or block out the various forces that constitute our whole being.

The ways we hide and show up to our students teach lessons about caring for ourselves, our students, and the subject matter. At the centre of authenticity is an openness to seeing life as it is, to what is present inside of ourselves and with those people and situations we encounter. This openness, referred to as the ‘beginner’s mind’ in Zen Buddhism (Suzuki, 1970), precludes judgments about right and wrong, good and bad, and allows the greatest latitude for how we might relate to any given situation.

Every thought, person, experience, is treated as having a place in the world. As Zimmerman (1986), discussing Heidegger explains “to care for something authentically means to let it manifest itself in its own way” (Heidegger, as cited in Kreber et al., 2007, pp. 29-30). To be clear, this manifestation is concerned with allowing what is often hidden, subtle, and contained deep within a person to emerge rather than treating the symptoms that arise from blocking this potential. From time to time, there are students in my classes who resist or protest the latitude I give them in defining the scope and direction of their research projects. They direct their anger and frustration at me and I feel a desire to soothe them by giving directions and ideas about what they could explore. However, I have often found it more generative to speak with these students (either individually or as part of a whole class conversation) about the uncertainty and discomfort that comes with defining your own direction. These conversations seem to precipitate an inner awareness for some students that they have very specific desires and questions, but the majority of their educational experiences have rarely encouraged them to follow these desires and questions. In recognizing and validating my students’ frustration towards me as potentially connected to something deeper within themselves allows me to see the “inner pluralism” of our souls (Palmer, 1998, p. 25), a reminder that my students too have a complex and diverse inner life.

Doing Inner Work

Warmth, empathy, encouragement, acceptance, and authenticity are not skills or techniques, but something we feel. I think of the place between our fluid centre and our experience of the world as being mediated by the heart, the “receptacle of our experience” (Denton, 1998, p. 54), the place where we are entered and pierced by knowledge; “it is in the heart that I am touched by experience, where I feel the effect of experience, where I notice my response” (Denton, 1998, p. 54).

In attending to our inner world “we see more clearly our unexamined conflicts and fears, our frailties and confusion” (Kornfield, as cited in Denton 2005). Holistic educator Diane Denton (2005) observes that these experiences are where the unconscious can be brought to light because “this feeling heart, the heart that moves with the intimacy of contact, is a heart moved by what it sees” (p. 765).

Bringing our entire awareness to the heart involves *inner work practices*, which support developing capacities to witness and observe experience in the first-person²⁰ (Cohen, 2009, p. 31). Inner work is about "working on and with perceptions, sensations, memories, and cognitions, all of which constitute a person's experience" (Cohen, 2009, p. 31). *Inner* is not something purely inside the body or mind, but "a personal idiom of experiencing our bodies, other people, the animate and inanimate world: imagination, dreams, fantasy, and beyond that to even further reaches of experience" (Laing, 1967, p. 21).

The work of inner work suggests that practice, training, diligence, method, and study are required. I am inspired by the pragmatic orientation to the study of subjective experience put forward in the phenomenology of (Depraz, Varela, & Vermersch, 2003, p. 170). They say that:

we need training because we are not experts regarding the objects which make up our experience and toward which we can turn ourselves...any more than we are botanists because we can turn our attention to the plants in our gardens! The content of subjective experience is not any more directly given to us than the content of the experience of the world (Depraz et al., 2003, p. 101).

For our efforts at inner work to connect us to our existential core, Depraz, Varela, and Vermersch (2003) suggest that becoming aware requires; a) sustained examinations of experience; b) apprenticeships with a teacher or teachers that lead towards our own self-mastery, and; c) feedback and encounters with others (intersubjective validation). These elements are important because of the dangers of solipsism where in we become ensnared by our conditioned ways of perceiving. We need to give ourselves to some

20 First-person processes, namely anything that allows the inquirer to investigate subjective experience as the primary focus (e.g., meditation, reflection, phenomenological reduction, etc.), reveal the way in which perception is both conditioned by past experience and potentially open to new possibilities arising in the moment. Both past experience and new possibilities arise, through impulses creative and reactive, to animate action. Contemplative practices including meditation and prayer are uniquely designed for such inquires as they are systematic and aimed towards developing heightened states of consciousness/awareness that can be integrated into daily life (Sarath, 2003).

kind of experiential training in order for our taken for granted assumptions and habits to be disrupted.

The study of one's experience is a phenomenological turn towards gaining a richer understanding of the meaning of lived experience (van Manen, 1990, 1986)²¹. The phenomenological turn gives attention to immediate experiences of the world, before theorizing and conceptualizing happens. This kind of research asks what kind of 'essential' experiences and meanings are part of being fully human, and in my case, invites inquiry into what the experience of becoming whole and authentic as an educator is like. Although the content and nuance of my experiences are unique, they may point to the possible experience of others; the particular leads to the universal.

I like the term inner work because 'inner' points towards the subtle, hidden, unconscious, mysterious, not readily apparent or definable. There is a landscape to our lives that is different than the external, objective realities as well as what we are conscious of. Those who have travelled far and wide through the inner landscape have a wisdom that cannot be readily discernible on the surface of what they look like, how they move, and how they speak—at least not to those who have not done some traveling along their own path. To explore our own interiority is to go to those unfamiliar places.

Inner also suggests potential in the same way that the full, whole, and complete form of a tree is hidden inside the seed, which will emerge under certain conditions. Inner thus also implies the outer and it is in the dialogue between the two where the

21 The inward turn hinges upon the *epoché*, "the interruption of any quest for truth" (Depraz et al., 2003, p. 25) and involves, at least for a time, a suspension of judgment and taken for granted assumptions. The *epoché* has three phases; 1. suspension; 2. directing attention from external to internal; and 3. letting-go or accepting experience. A suspension is any "worldly, intersubjective or individual motivation" to suspend accustomed, habitual activity can be initiated by an 1) external event, 2) someone telling you to do so, 3) telling/training yourself to suspend, and I would add 4) an internal event (Depraz et al., 2003, p. 26). Suspension is an ongoing requirement to redirect attention and for letting go. Redirecting attention is about attending to the life of the inner world and then letting something come to awareness, something not "immediately available" to conscious awareness, but from beyond (p. 31). Without temporarily stopping our normal course of action in the outer world, our attention cannot be conjoined in deepening ways with the life of the inner world. There is a beginner's stage to developing the capacity to attend to the inner world that, past which, suspension "can co-exist quite naturally with fully situated action". Through various practices, we can learn to attend to the inner and outer world together as a "flowing co-existence" (Depraz et al., 2003, p. 36)

work of inner work happens. Our subjective experience doesn't happen in a bubble, isolated from the world, it is saturated by the relational context of our lives; our sensuous bodies, language, history, culture, environment, human, and more-than-human relationships. One cannot know his or her existential core without reference to this web of relations. Second-person inquiry reveals the other side of the first-person inquiry, whereas first-person inquiry shows how what is thought of as "outside" has a subjective dimension with an inside, second-person inquiry reveals how what is "inside" has a relational and creative dimension in the outer world. What we make, how we move, and what we say is also reflection of what's going on inside of us.

Work also implies play:

A Master in the art of living makes little distinction between his [sic] work and his play, his labor and his leisure, his mind and his body, his education and his recreation, his love and his religion. He hardly knows which is which. He simply pursues his vision of excellence in whatever he does, leaving others to decide whether he is working or playing. To him he is always doing both. (Jacks, 1932, p. 1)²²

But I do like the term work and use it instead of play or some other term for a number of reasons. In physics, work refers to forces acting upon bodies through movement. As I show later on, much of what constitutes my understanding of personal and social transformation is deeply rooted in the movement of the body. In Vedic philosophy, work is related to *karma*, the Sanskrit term for 'deed' referring to that which creates the cycle of cause and effect (*samsara*). In Chinese *gong* means 'work' or 'achievement.' The suffix *fu* in gong-fu (known in English as kung-fu) means intensity and gong-fu is *any* achievement or skill developed through many years of vigorous and dedicated effort or work²³. Corporeal mime master Etienne Decroux described why this work is important for engaging our core:

22 The origin of this quote is believed to have originated in Unitarian minister L.P. Jacks' 1932 book *Education through recreation*. See: <http://quoteinvestigator.com/2010/08/27/master>

23 Lorge (2011) notes that kung-fu only started referring to martial arts specifically in post-Imperial China.

Underneath the stew pot, there's the flame. That's why it boils. That's why the lid lifts off. There must be something underneath. Whatever one says or does, there's something underneath and that something is work. And work is not agitated movement. It is discipline (Decroux, as cited in Zarrilli, 2009, p. 21).

I like the term because work suggests a commitment to being present to one's experience, to *working with* whatever comes, to making it *workable* and functional. I see inner work as an apprenticeship to the details of our lives where we are always learning as we go, "on the job"²⁴. Inner work is an ongoing process oriented towards helping us to get unstuck and move with a potential in us and in others that wants to emerge.

Into the Dojo

It is to the martial arts that I now turn as a way of cultivating my existential core and conducting embodied inner work research in ways that are responsive to my movements. In Chapter 4 I outline the martial arts as a practical pathway for integrating mind and body. In order for martial arts, or any practice, to be practices of inner work and capable of transforming the obstacles that obscure a person's existential core from being expressed, certain attitudes and values in the practice of such arts are paramount. The philosophy of Japanese *budō* and subject-object interpenetration, a hallmark of eastern philosophy and practice, is outlined as the foundation for training. In Chapter 5 I write about my apprenticeship in *neigong* and reveal glimpses of what animates my existential core.

24 See Depraz et al. (2003) for an excellent articulation of phenomenological inquiry as enactive process that requires one to be actively engaged in doing some activity as the ground for phenomenological reduction.

Chapter 5 - Training

This chapter offers some insight into the embodied inner work training I have taken up over the past three years with Sifu Lou Crockett of Blue Mountain NeiGong in Coquitlam, BC²⁵. I have previously studied other martial arts including *wing chun* with my father Larry Park and Yang family *taijiquan* and *qigong* with Sifu Dylan Kirk. My study with Lou, however, is unique in terms of my dedication to practicing daily, the precise feedback about my posture and movements, and the emphasis throughout all exercises and applications on the development of whole-mind/whole-body power rather than isolated muscular power, which I describe below. An in-depth academic study of *neigong* and *taijiquan* is beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, as the following sections illustrate, there have been a number of very useful cross-cultural translations and conceptual handles that have supported an increasingly nuanced and integrated understanding of how to train the mind-body to exceptional levels. These handles are tremendously important because they play a major role in animating the body. A great deal of the conversation I have had with Lou has focused on how particular concepts such as *intention*, *relaxation*, and *whole-body movement* actively shape how particular muscles are used in the body when we are thinking to ourselves "relax." The movement, structure and felt experience of the body is the true litmus test for increasingly more accurate embodiment of these concepts and it is here that a rich dialogue between the thinking mind and the unconscious body is central to ongoing development.

Cultivating Mind-Body Unity: Martial Arts as Way

Martial arts seems on the surface to be worlds away from how we might understand ourselves and our work as educators, except perhaps in the rare instance a

²⁵ Lou began his study of Internal Martial Arts in 1973 with Master Raymond Y.M. Chung, learning the entire Yang and Wu family systems of taijiquan. Concurrent to teaching taijiquan for the SFU Recreation Department and the Performing Arts Department from 1980 to 1989, Lou studied Acupressure, Massage and Chinese Herbal Medicine with Mr. Tom Suey Eng in Silver Creek, BC. His focus shifted to neigong in 1995, when he began his study with Mike Sigman of Colorado and Master Zhang Xue Xin of San Francisco, in addition to attending workshops with Chen Family Standard Bearer Master Chen Xiao Wang.

physical confrontation might need to be de-escalated. In an ethos of zero-tolerance towards violence and an emphasis on compassion and conflict resolution, the contemporary, popular image of the martial artist as one delivers well placed, debilitating blows to an opponent appears outright offensive. The successful Ultimate Fighting Championships, which are no-holds barred and often bloody matches, portray the martial artist as a fighter who is fierce, menacing, and unforgiving. Indeed, many martial arts were developed as part of the need in various cultures to defend against invading enemies. In life or death situations, lethal skills were at a premium.

We can admire the physical strength, balance, and flexibility and mental determination, sensitivity, and concentration required to be an effective martial artist, however we rarely see the virtuous martial artist who is capable of transforming conflict into peace without even moving or touching anything. These people can sit in the fire of distressing situations, remain open and curious to unfolding events with an intention to understand, stay connected, and respond creatively out of a desire to include and work with everything the situation presents. It is this later approach to martial arts training that I am advocating for and express in this chapter the underlying philosophies and attitudes of martial arts practice as a way of opening up to and leading from our existential core or heart. The highest level of training, which aims to integrate mind and body, is one in which every aspect of our inner life is integrated with how we move in the world.

Budō

The Japanese make a distinction between martial practices and techniques used for combative purposes (*bujutsu*) and the training in combative techniques to cultivate physical, mental and spiritual capacities (*budō*). *Bu* means martial or war and *jutsu* means technique, skill, or method and together *bujutsu* translates as combat or martial skill. At one point in Japan's history, and in the history of many other cultures, martial skills were key to the survival of clans and families. There was a practical, utilitarian purpose. However, during the relatively peaceful Edo period (1603-1868), *budo* developed. *Dō* is the Japanese equivalent of the Dao in Chinese and refers to the path or way of life and *budō* translates as martial way. *Budō* is thus concerned with martial practice as an expression of one's entire way of life.

When associated with a particular practice such as tea ceremony (*chado*) or calligraphy (*shodo*), an art understood as a *do* or Way tells us that this activity has "surpassed its utilitarian purpose and been raised to the level of art" (Davey, 2007, p. 8). Here, martial arts as a Way are practiced not to defeat an opponent in battle, but "to understand the ultimate nature of the whole of life by examining ourselves through a singular activity of life: to arrive at the universal through studying the particular" (Davey, 2007, p. 8)²⁶. The universal concerns the dynamics of birth, death, growth, evolution, emergence, decay, and change and the arts have the potential to teach us how to live, move and dance with these dynamics. Davey (2007) writes that understanding the *Do* through one art gives one insight into the "principles, aesthetics, and mental states common to all the Ways" (p. 31). The key to any *do* is that we are actually engaged in some kind of physical action with mindful awareness of what we are *do*-ing.

Any art form, when rooted in philosophies and practices for skillfully moving with and being moved by all of life's transitions and experiences, has potential for teaching us how to develop groundedness, mindfulness, integrity, compassion, co-operation, and creativity in the face of difficult circumstances. These qualities are important for educators who seek to address conflicts and challenges within themselves and with the students and peers they work with. While studying martial arts will not make someone a good educator or vice-versa, *budō* can illuminate certain aspects of mind-body connection, intuition, intention, presence, and attunement in interpersonal relationships and reveal more about who the educator is and how they show up in classrooms. It is through a "thorough study of a particular Way [that] allows us to assimilate these qualities and apply them to practice of unlike art forms" (Davey, 2007, p. 32)

Although initially the primary focus of training, it is not the outward forms and movements of the martial arts that matters most, rather that is the way the existential core animates these movements. As authentic movement teacher Mary Starks Whitehouse tells us, the patterned and goal-oriented movement in sports and other

26 In the west, Aristotle made a similar distinction in examining knowledge that serves utilitarian purposes (*techne*) and knowledge that leads to development of one's humanity, which are reflected in the aims of liberal education (Levine, 1991, p. 8)

kinds of physical activities is not enough to touch our conditioning and existential core because "they don't connect us with ourselves...they still have a motive external to the experience of ourselves" (Whitehouse, as cited in Pallaro, 1990, p. 35). The combative and intensely physical dimension of martial arts are vital to connecting us to ourselves because the potential for injury and death "gives direction to our training and provides the orientation that encourages us to advance toward a certain kind of perfection" (Tokitsu, 2012, p. 42). When training is viewed as a life and death matter (actually or just psychologically), space and acceptance is made for practitioners to get in touch with our instinctual responses (fight/flight/freeze), fears, and emotions, and aspects of themselves that typically lie outside of our self-perceptions. Such phenomena are included as part of the training as they impact the mind-body relationship and the alignment between our feelings, beliefs, and actions. Davey (2007) suggests that cultivating mind-body unity through martial arts brings undiscovered talents and abilities to the surface, enabling us to bring the "force of our total being" (p. 90) upon all of our actions. Through softening and kneading the fragmented and rough edges of our being, the resistance and gaps that separate mind and body and prevent us from being and becoming give way to an unburdened expression of our existential core.

Kokoro and Yuasa's Cultivated Mind-Body Unity

Our unique expression of being in the world, our authenticity, is seen from an eastern perspective as arising from an exceptional degree of unity between mind and body. It is through an "achieved body-mind unity" (Yuasa, 1987, p. 2), that we can consider freedom, aesthetic creativity, embodiment, authenticity, and so on as outcomes that arise from conditioning and training the body-mind to exceptional levels. This unity enables *budō* to generate the entire force of our being in all of our actions, exceptional or mundane. Yuasa distinguishes eastern and western body-mind theories and points out that western philosophy considers what the relationship between mind and body is whereas an eastern approach asks what the relationship between the two can become in experience through cultivation (*shugyo*) or training (*keiko*) (Yuasa, 1987, p. 19). This cultivation is a "practical project" aimed at enhancing "the personality and the training of the spirit by means of the body" (Yuasa, 1987, p. 85).

Yuasa draws extensively from his translations of Nishida Kitaro, a Japanese philosopher whose philosophy was based on his lived experience with seated meditation (*zazen*) to describe the hallmark of this unity—‘active intuition,’ a central element to all exceptional human experiences including in the arts, sciences, sports, and religion. In active intuition, the authentic self is not animated by the ego-consciousness that exists at the surface, "bright layer" of consciousness, but the immersion of the self into the body, a "dark cogito" that cannot be seen at the surface (Yuasa, 1987, p. 61). This base of consciousness is a "region with infinite depth" (Yuasa, 1987, p. 63). Conscious thought and will work on this top layer and impulse, sensation and perception occur at this deeper, dark layer. At first glimpse, the conscious mind and reasoning are seen as being active and the intuitive is understood to be the passive, receiving aspect of consciousness. However, as the mind goes deeper into the body through an embodied practice:

this structure [intuition-passive/action-active] reverses; intuition becomes active and action passive [...] on this deeper level, action now means that the self, receiving the power of its intuition, advances towards the world of everyday life . . . it acts reflexively as it were, towards the world of everyday life (Yuasa, 1987, p. 69).

This state of mind-body of unity is referred to as *mushin* (無心), a Japanese term that translates in English to ‘without mind’ or ‘no-mind,’ the mental state of body-mind unity achieved by masters in the martial arts and meditation (Yuasa, 1987). The mind and body, unfettered by emotions, judgments, ego or thoughts, is available to freely respond to anything and everything that arises, both during combat and during daily life. Action is not premeditated by conscious thought, but arises spontaneously from intuition. To achieve *mushin*, the martial artist trains his or her body over many years with very specific mental and physical training practices. Emphasis is placed on practice with a stable and alert mind that has no intent or plans nor fixates upon a particular outcome or experience, putting the practitioner in a *flow* state (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). This movement towards unity is the essence of spiritual and artistic practice and for the student there is an experience of the body moving itself:

there is a state which subject and object are not differentiated and the intellect

and will are merged. It is a state in which the self and things are mutually responsive to each other; things do not move the self nor vice versa. There is only one world, one scene. (Yuasa, 1987, pp. 47-48)

When the self can penetrate the depths of the body, the body becomes a subject and the mind "loses its opposition to objects; it gives up being ego-consciousness" and experiences samadhi" (Yuasa, 1987, p. 72). Samadhi is the self without out being a self, our original face, and the face you had before you were born. The division between a conscious subject and an objective body to which one does something to is dissolved; "the mind [*kokoro*] becomes one with the thing and it strikes to the heart [*kokoro*] of the thing" (Yuasa, 1987, p. 72).

Kokoro has a special meaning in the Japanese theatrical art of *no*. *No* master Zeami considers *kokoro* to be what moves audiences in the deepest way possible although is difficult to describe or teach actors how to achieve it because it is a metaphysical concept that "encompasses such things as feeling and emotion, soul and spirit, mind and the objective knowing process, consciousness and self, intent and will, a pure and non-conscious mind, and a spiritual state representing the deepest levels of the total self" (Pilgrim, as cited in Ortolani, 1990, p. 122). *Kokoro*, being rooted in the "true essence of all things, or the all-encompassing, unchanging pure Buddha-nature . . . it is the artist who passes through phases or stages of skills and realizations, eventually becoming one with the heart of everything, unconsciously and spontaneously following the rhythms of the One, the Absolute, the primordial Energy" (Ortolani, 1990, p. 123). By focusing on the felt experience of the body while engaging in a practice such as *taijiquan*, *neigong*, the India martial art *kalarippayattu* or *yoga*, the activated bodymind can then be a vessel primed for giving rise to the expression of the existential core (or *kokoro*).

Attitude Toward Practice

There are distinct attitudes to training that are important to granting us access to our existential core in martial arts training taken up as a way of being. Tokitsu (2012) points out two terms of Buddhist origin that are valuable in understanding cultural attitudes about practice: *kié* and *shugyô*. *Kié* means to follow the Buddhist doctrine with

faith and belief in the Buddha as a figure outside of him or herself. It “denotes a certain attitude, that of being dependent or becoming dependent on a teaching or dogma” (Tokitsu, 2012, para 8). Those who depend on dogma established by the guru or teacher that instructs them consider their master to have access to a knowledge that they can never obtain:

You own the object and cherish it as a treasure. You still don't know its composition, but it doesn't matter, because the object comes from the Master, who guarantees its great value. So it is a treasure for you as well . . . Kié-ha people consider from the outset that understanding the composition of the cherished object is not within their grasp. But they do not need to understand it; indeed they're not even equipped to understand it. It suffices that the master, having understood it himself, assures them of its value. His words are what guarantee the value of their practice. So it is enough if they simply follow his teaching . . . You train in the discipline of the school of the Master as if you were reciting a sutra. You don't need to know the meaning of the words or of their sound, since the act of reciting is sacred in itself, and therefore effective, since it is the Master who says so. (Tokitsu, 2012, para 10)

Shugyo is the propensity towards seeking the truth for one's self through practice: “A shugyo-ha in Buddhism tries to follow the paths of Buddha on his own, even if he progresses only a little” (Tokitsu, 2012, para 12). Central to an artistic practice that is concerned with our existential core is a dynamic process of refinement and integration that is ongoing. Is my artistic practice a mechanical activity or something that keeps me in touch with the present moment and the unknown? How is my suffering, my joy, my compassion, my courage, and my desire showing up in my expressions and movements? How can my movements support me in being with these states? These questions point to a process of mastery where there is a mind-body relationship that, more than just existing as western philosophy posits (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999), has the potential to be progressively integrated. Practice is a path along which we can achieve increasing integration.

The practice, at its ultimate, reveals to us an ontological understanding of human *nature*, the wide-open animating ground from which experience springs forth and dissolves back into. Japanese mind-body theorist Yasuo Yuasa (1987) suggests that:

As long as we stick to the ontical, ordinary understanding, normality or averageness is the judgmental criterion and all conditions deviating from it are indistinguishably "abnormal"...This ordinary ontic view cannot achieve an ontological understanding of human nature. To accomplish the latter, we must probe into the ideal, ultimate conditions for body-mind capacities. (p. 208)

The 'abnormal' outliers—artistic masters, Buddhas, Einstein and so on—represent the far reaches of human experience and illuminate, through their being and their creations, a liberating understanding of what it means to be human. To probe into the ideal and ultimate conditions for our existential core to imbue our actions and movements requires that we question the narratives that define what is normal and look radically²⁷ at what is obscuring the core of our own subjectivity. One consequence of failing to do so is "automaton conformity," a phrase Erich Fromm used to describe "a pervasive (but semi deliberate) numbing of our humanistic conscience and our critical faculties—a state of frictionless adaptation to one's surroundings" (Buston & Frie, 2006, p. 238)²⁸. We must "live soundly against the stream" of what constitutes the normal (Fromm, 1954, p. 42) if we are to know the ontological grounds of our nature and to do so requires developing our capacities for embodied inner work.

Culture and Modern Education

To understand martial arts-as-Way (*budo*) in my own context, it is important to look at the historical, culturally-specific, and cross-cultural aspects of Asian martial arts. For example, the way of the warrior, at its pinnacle in the Edo period in Japan, is long gone. Understanding the relevance of *budo* in our modern world needs to consider the

27 Radical comes from the Latin radix meaning "root"

28 See Fromm, E. (1941). *Escape from Freedom*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

wider ecology in which the practices are taken up. A case in point, Levine (1991) questions whether the goals of modern *budo* and the pedagogy of the *dojo* are compatible with liberal values of autonomy, critical thought, compassion, and adaptability. Modern *budo*, a catch-all term for all Japanese martial arts, he points out, is characterized by authoritarianism, anti-intellectualism, excessive competition, and even doctrinaire and cultish attitudes. Students are expected to obey and not question an all-knowing teacher. Discussion of rationales and principles behind the art are shunned and loyalty to the teacher and school are demanded. Students and schools are pitted against each other in competition and value is placed on defeating the opponent. These characteristics do not support student autonomy, dialogue, and deep intersubjectivity.

To see how such an understanding of *budo* has come about in Asia and in the west, it's helpful to look at the historical development of the martial arts as a relational and cultural phenomenon. Consider the origins and development of the Okinawan *goju ryu karate* in Japan. Magnusson (2011) writes that in:

Okinawan training predating the Japanese appropriation of karate within the school system, there were no uniforms, no ranking system, and no rigid curriculum with tests one must pass. People, mostly men, simply showed up to train, and there was a considerable amount of informal sharing, informal innovation, and very little “systemization” as such. People followed their own pathways of training, which sometimes meant committing a number of years of training to one teacher, and sometimes following different pathways and different teachers and different communities. Often families or clans would constitute the focal point of training communities. It was a kind of heteroglossia of martial arts expression, with people sharing, borrowing, and innovating not unlike street arts such as break dancing. (p. 9)

Traditional Okinawan training, she notes, is much like that portrayed in the movie *The Karate Kid* where the teacher never gives the student a weapon to train with but has him

condition his body by doing daily tasks like painting a fence and washing cars²⁹. The ways in which karate developed amongst the Okinawans reflected not only practical and adaptive modes of self-defence in response to Japanese occupation, during which martial arts was outlawed for Okinawans, but everything in their society including healing, relationships, and politics (Magnusson, 2011, p. 9)

Okinawan karate later became appropriated into Japanese culture and education as a “routinized, hierarchized, and militarized” (Magnusson, 2011, p. 7) system of nationalization where students had to wear white uniforms and pledge unwavering and unquestioning respect to higher ranked students under the guise of learning the ways of the warrior. Martial arts training became a way of generating “nationalistic nostalgia . . . around ancient percepts of “budo”, which were encouraged to foster certain dispositions that were deemed desirable within the military industrial citizenry of modern Japan” (Magnusson, 2011, p. 7). True *budo*, Magnusson points out, is thus not “the 'individual art' of self development one often encounters in for-profit new age qi gong studios”, but is instead relational and historically grounded (Magnusson, 2011, p. 8).

The traditional forms of martial arts training which are characterized by informal, unsystematized, and apprenticeship-based teaching still exist in Asia and to some limited extent in the west. However, in our globalized world, many students are not likely to have had any exposure to the traditional forms of training nor the principles that underpin them (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 82). Formal systems of education that prepare students for a competitive, industrialized global economy—which favours systematized and analytical forms of knowledge - have reached virtually every corner of the planet.

My Training

29 According to Magnusson: “Practitioners artfully incorporated very simple implements into their practice that could, in fact, be an effective defense against the ruling weapon of the time, which was the sword. Thus, martial artists learned how to use a stick to counter a sword attack, for example. Or to press two thick sticks against their forearm, which hid the sticks from sight while protecting the forearm from attack from an edged weapon.” (Magnusson, 2011, p. 7)

Over a cup of tea, Lou asks me if I can pick up the tea cup with my whole body. How can I bring my whole body and mind into physically engaging with the world? I 'fail' after a number of what I take to be intensely mindful attempts. Apparently, I was reaching out and lifting only with my arms even though I thought my core and legs were also involved. Lou demonstrates and points out how he uses the lower parts of his body to "go under" the cup as he lifts it. He has me feel the slight changes in his back, legs, and lower abdomen that he goes through although in a slightly more exaggerated way so that I can actually see and feel these changes. The way he lifts the cup seems so effortless. It is quite beautiful to see and it looks like it even brings ease to his mind to move in this way. What strikes me the most is not the frustration of failing nor Lou's mastered movements but a growing awareness of the subtle complexity of how I could move, of how I could articulate my body, of how well I know myself and the possibilities for how I could interact with the world. I want to know . . . what the hell does it mean to "go underneath" the cup?

I now describe my martial arts (*neigong* and *taijiquan*) training with Sifu Lou Crockett. This training is apprentice-based and considers mind-body unity as the ultimate aim of the art. I give a basic foundation to the theory behind the arts and illustrate how various internal aspects of myself are connected and how I am interconnected with my immediate life-world; with the places I go, the food I cook, and the baby I hold. The 'dark' aspect of my bodymind begins to reveal itself and a sense of my own presence or life force becomes readily palpable. My intention is to show the specificity of embodied inner work practice and how such a practice supports greater integration within myself and with others.

I frame martial arts, practiced as a Way that is relational, historical grounded, and self-cultivation, as a form of *contemplative inquiry* (Zajonc, 2009). Arthur Zajonc (2009) writes about contemplative inquiry as a way of learning with love wherein our respect, gentleness, vulnerability and openness to that which is 'other' leads to becoming transformed and united by it. What appears outside now becomes inside, we become as it is. Knowing is an act of being vulnerable to what has been before unknown, an act of opening that requires the knower to overcome the conventional subject-object dichotomy and shift into a mode of consciousness characterized by descriptions of subject-object interpenetration (Bai & Banack, 2006).

Interpenetration here is an ontological foundation where mind and body, self, and society/other, inside and outside, being and non-being, doing and non-doing are seen as integrated dualities (Nakagawa, 2000). Instead of attempting to separate ourselves from our direct experience of our inner world or some object (an organism, the body, a text, a question, a piece of art, etc.) for the sake of a detached objectivity, Zajonc (2006) says that truth and insight can be arrived at through moving into a deep intimacy with our experience of the Other. This move requires that "we must be confident enough to be vulnerable, secure enough to resign ourselves to the course of things" (Zajonc, 2006, p. 3). This vulnerability and intimacy can lead towards transforming and becoming transformed by the object, coming to directly perceiving the object as it is³⁰.

The objects in the martial arts are the mind, the body, vision, the ground, the breath, gravity, the training partner, and so on. In the process of opening myself to these objects and in being changed by them, I start to see that my life-world is the grounds of a *lived curriculum* that weaves a braid out of my personal narrative, academic study, and questions about inner work in educational contexts (Pinar, 2012). Using the training of working with bodymind as a foundation, Chapter 5 and 6 point towards how my body, my thoughts, my fears, my desires, and my encounters with peers and students are all objects of inquiry that I can open to. Enfolded within the theory and practice of internal martial arts as a Way are meta-skills (Amy Mindell, 1995), that transfer to other parts of my life. I write about how these meta-skills apply to education in Chapter 6.

Neigong and the Taijiquan Body

30 This intimacy has an "aesthetic attitude to the world that is central to self-nurturance, to the nurturance of others and to the nurturance of the world itself" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, p. 566 in Denton, 2005, p. 765). Denton links this experience of deep connection with other as being similar to Lakoff and Johnson's (1999) imaginative empathic projection in which we can feel and imaginatively embody the experience of others around us. For the educator, the imaginative empathic projection is really just a mirroring back to the student the potential he or she has within. This potential, not fully formed, needs a safe holding environment that honours the sometimes dream-like quality to the yearnings and questions of students and educators. It is actually a dreaming process where educator and student work to creatively bring unconscious activity to the fore.

The basis for acquiring tai chi chuan strength is learning how to relax the muscles of the whole-body. Relaxation is then the starting point for learning how to marshal the strength of all your muscles—i.e., whole-body strength. Whether working on muscle relaxation or mobilization, the idea is always to do it to a degree beyond the ordinary level. Our capacity for relaxing the muscles mirrors our capacity for marshalling (sic) strength. (Tokitsu, 2012)



Figure 2: San Ti (Three Body) Posture

The martial art of *taijiquan* is thought to have originated and developed over many centuries since at least the T'ang dynasty (618-907)³¹. Taijiquan is translated as 'boxing (*quan*) of the supreme ultimate (*taiqi*).' *Taiqi*, which is often mistaken for the martial art, actually refers to a cosmic ontology of yin and yang, the complementary pair of opposites that drive change in the cosmos. *Taijiquan* is a framework within one can experience the changing cosmos through a thorough exploration of one's own bodymind. The central element to this exploration is *neigong*, the hallmark of internal martial arts. Neigong is unique in that it involves engages in vigorous physical activity with a body that is completely relaxed, a contradiction that creates an unusual power.

31 Four historical lineages have emerged with distinct training styles and techniques; Chen, Yang, Wu, and Sun (see Draeger and Smith, 1980)

Traditional martial arts such as *taijiquan* are considered internal arts (*neijiaquan*) because of the foundational practice of *neigong*, the distinguishing feature from 'external' sports-style martial arts (*weijiquan*)³².

All martial arts involve some degree of energy or qi cultivation, but only the internal arts emphasize *neigong* throughout the training (Kim, 2009). External arts focus on generating power through muscular effort whereas *neigong* (内功), which means 'inner work' or 'internal skill' in Chinese, activates the 'total body energy' that originates from the union of breath (*qi*), will (*yi*), and movement. Such movement is characterized by the Daoist concepts of effortlessness (*wuwei*) and spontaneity (*ziran*), and can "encompass, not only more conventional ideas of health and fitness, but also, uncommon power and even spiritual enlightenment" (Kim, 2009, pp. 131-132). Kim points out that the combat philosophy of the internal arts is rooted in the Daoist philosophy of receptivity and "effortless adaptation" wherein humans are seen as part of the cosmos and should seek to find flow with the cosmos (p. 130). Translated into a combat situation:

if faced with an attack, one should respond with fluid evasion, deflection, and/or re-direction of the attacker's energy back at the attacker. One should do all this while exerting as little muscular tension as possible, expending as little energy as possible. (Kim, 2009, p. 131)

'True' internal martial arts, that is, those that are rooted in *neigong*, are difficult to find in North America. Despite the popularity of *taijiquan*, it still remains a so-called "empty-form" (L. Crockett, personal communication, 2013); the way it is taught and practiced makes it good for exercise and relaxation, but not for the development of intuition, non-

32 I do not intend to give much of an account of the development of various martial arts in China, except to note that they have a long history, dating back over 4,000 years to the beginning of Chinese civilization. Of course, martial arts are not unique to China and can be found in other regions; Southern India has kalarippayattu, Israel has krav maga and Brazil is well-known for capoeira. One explanation for the development of martial arts in China, is that because of an unstable society with invaders, thieves, war lords and feuding factions, effective fighting systems were developed as people needed some way of defending themselves. They were also used in resistance and protests against oppressive rulers (Hackney, 2010). In much more recent history, martial arts have been adapted for competition sports (e.g. taekwondo).

ordinary states of consciousness, or effective combat applications. Generating power from anything other than gross, brute, muscular force is counter-intuitive.

Neigong is considered to have originated out of Daoist breathing practices designed to enhance longevity by accumulating, refining, and moving energy throughout the body (Wong, 1992). According to Kim (2009):

Daoism envisioned the corporeal self as a holistic system wherein there is dynamic feedback between heart-mind and body-self [...] Each affects the other, but such processes occur naturally, without the intent on the part of the person...It is believed that, through neigong, one could intentionally manipulate qi [energy] so as to influence its movement, quality, and quantity within the body. This control of qi is achieved by "cultivating a 'mindful body' or 'embodied mind'" - ie. by unifying qi and mind - through neigong's combination of intention, visualization and special breathing (p. 136).

Such practices give importance to the structure of the whole body, and when joined with other embodied practices such as *taijiquan*, these practices are valuable because they: a) improve health by working the bones, fascia, muscles of the body as well as developing strength, coordination and stamina; b) reduce stress and balance moods and emotions, and; c) increase intuition, sensory awareness and concentration (Kim, 2009, p. 133). The "truly seductive lure" of *neigong* is that it is thought to elicit spontaneous and highly focused releases of energy that physical conditioning cannot achieve, energy that can be used to harm or heal (Kim, 2009, p. 135)³³. It is in these spontaneous and intuitive movements that acting intuition is expressed. We are all capable of such

33 Demonstrations of qi power are endemic to almost all martial arts and capture the allure that draws so many people in. Some of these demonstrations are tricks that rely on students exaggerating their movements so the teacher appears to have more power than they really do. Other demonstrations including the unraisable body or unmovable body are legitimate manifestations of peculiar strength, but can be explained in terms of biomechanics and physics (see James, D. (2004). Unraisable Body: The Physics of Martial Arts. *Sport Health*, 22(1), pp. 15-21.). Achieving the embodied mechanics to resist being lifted off the ground, as is demonstrated in the unraisable body, is a significant feat that requires significant mental control over how relaxed and engaged the body is and an ability to transfer forces coming from multiple directions through the arms and down to the ground. It is the development of the mental control (intent or yi) that is one mark of an art considered to be "internal".

movement, evidenced in seemingly superhuman feats where people become temporarily able to lift cars to save people. During such extreme situations, the deliberating mode of mind is quiet and a self-consciousness, which would surely assess the weight of a car as being impossible to move, is not present. The mind has not fixated on an idea about how to do the movement or a plan for how to co-ordinate each muscle to lift the weight, but is instead free and able move through the entire body unhindered.

This *taijiquan* body is built from having a strong, stable body core, which is then extended to the extremities “while allocating minimum work load to the large muscle groups and keeping the joints free of local tension” (Crockett, personal communication). What seems to be the paradox here is that *total* relaxation of the muscles is the basis for generating extraordinary power as the goal is mobilization of the muscles as a single unit³⁴. According to Tokitsu (2012) “our capacity for relaxing the muscles mirrors our capacity for marshalling strength” (para 5).

The ability to relax all the muscles in the body to a very high level leads to a heightened sensory awareness of the body, which includes a felt sense of vibrations, expansion, substantiality and density, heat and conditions in the external environment (noise, light, depth of field, movement of others, ground beneath us, etc.). When the body is tense from trying to brace itself in anticipation of movement, move something without any stable footing, or from the expectation of having to act, sensory awareness is diminished as the mind is tied up or overcommitted to a single point or idea. When we are relaxed, we can breathe with greater depth and ease, which supports further relaxation as “maximum oxygen intake and full carbon dioxide output while breathing as smoothly and seamlessly as possible feeds the muscles and nervous system, helping promote deep relaxation” (L. Crockett, personal communication, 2013).

34 Tokitsu writes “Yi chuan master Han Xingqiao (1909-2004) says in his book Yi-Chuan xué (The Study of Form-Mind Boxing): “You must transform troubled strength into the total strength generated by integrating the combined power of the entire body”. Here, what he calls “troubled” strength is the ordinary power generated by the partial activation of muscles. According to Han Xingqiao, yi chuan teaches you to “mobilize all the muscles, as though the body were wrapped in a single one”.” (n.d, p. 3)

Tokitsu (2012) tells us that there are degrees of muscle relaxation just as we have degrees of muscle tension and “what we want is full rather than partial relaxation, an achievement of a technical kind and a mandatory step towards learning what tai chi power is” (p. 4). As using the whole body means learning how to work with the ways in which muscles, joints, and tendons can complement and co-ordinate their action with each other, “full voluntary relaxation” also means being able to activate muscles in ways we aren’t used to (ibid, p. 4).

In the everyday, ordinary use of our bodies we pay close and precision attention to using specific muscles of our body to achieve a certain task while being completely unaware of the rest of the muscles in our body - this is considered a form of “utilitarian” strength and is considered “partial” or “broken” (ibid, p. 4). However:

“if all your muscle groups are small but you know how to use them as a whole, as if they formed a single long muscle, you could deploy great force, as if your body had become a long, powerful bow. In a way, bearing this image in mind, a body covered with huge muscles can be compared to that of a long bow made of numerous short bows, whereas a fully integrated body (zheng-ti) represents a single, long and powerful bow.” (Tokitsu, 2012)

Going Internal

Standing in my kitchen one afternoon, Lou picks up a penny and puts his hands behind his back. He pulls two closed fists from behind his back and levels them out in front of his chest towards me. Lou says that he is focusing in his mind on the hand that has the penny in it. He says he can feel the sensation of the penny in his hand and is visualizing what it looks like in his hand. Lou asks me to become calm and pay attention to any arising sense in myself of which hand the penny might be in. As I have no logical reason to pick one hand over the other, I rely on what seems like a small inkling to pick the right hand. I laugh as I'm curious as to what this game has to do with learning *taijiquan*. Lou is also a slight-of-hand magician and continually makes connections between magic, perception, embodiment and the martial arts.

To my astonishment, I am right more times than I'm wrong. I press him again and again to have me choose a hand and I start to notice that there is a very brief bend or distortion in my perception of Lou that leans to the left or the right. I feel as if not only my eyes, but my whole body is pulled ever so slightly towards one hand. I ask for us to switch roles. As I place my hands out in front of me, I focus my attention on my right hand. I keep my eyes focused on Lou as I pay attention to the sensation of a rounded metal plate in a warm sweaty palm. I can picture in my mind the penny in my right hand. Lou is paying close attention to me, his eyes steady. With so much attention being focused on my right hand, I feel almost naked, as if my intent is easily being discerned by his gaze. I can feel myself struggling with my body, which feels like it's twisting on the right side. My own gaze wants to turn to my right hand, which I'm sure must have knuckles a shade whiter than my left. More often than not, he guesses correctly within a matter of seconds what hand the penny is in.

Now the *taijiquan* lesson comes. Lou asks me to hold out my arm to the side of my body, parallel to the ground. He places one hand on my forearm and the other on my bicep and then asks me to try and push him away without changing my position. I exert hard but Lou actually becomes more grounded in his position having taken my force into his body. He tells me that he is able to "load" the force into his lower back and abdomen, and then into the ground, creating a kind of spring that can repel the force back into me. Obviously my usual tactics are not going to work here.

I put my arm out to the side of my body again and Lou, facing me, places his hands on my forearm and bicep. This time, he asks me to switch my awareness back and forth between the contact points where his hands meet my arms. For now, I am to not use any muscle force or try to move my arm, only to get a sense of what it is like to switch my awareness back and forth between these two spots. As I make the switch I can feel the rest of my body make slight adjustments to connect the line of force extending towards Lou down through my core and into the ground; I am only beginning to learn how to do this as the various stretches, movements, and partner work Lou has been teaching me develops the subtle body-mind co-ordination required to do this. Lou tells me that he can sense a subtle shift in pressure between his two hands.

Finally, he asks me to switch my awareness between each point of contact on my arm with the intent of moving my arm through and beyond him. This requires some muscle exertion, but for the most part the exertion comes from the work required to adjust my legs, core and back muscles in such a way that I can feel a continuous line of force extending through my body from the ground, into Lou and beyond. I am surprised at how easily I am able to move him and I try it again a few times with similar results. In both cases, the first being the use of brute force and the second requiring a different mind-body co-ordination dynamic, Lou 'gives me' his centre. In other words, he doesn't make it difficult for me to find his centre so that I can learn the difference between linear muscle force and the whole body force that I am learning to develop through my study of *neigong* and *taijiquan* with him. In the first case I experience the vectors of force coming equally from each point in my arm to create a single, linear vector which pushes into his core. By routing this line into the ground through his body, Lou has no problem meeting the force head on. However, in the second scenario, the alternation of my intention between each point of contact started to rock and tip Lou's centre side-to-side ever so slightly and this unbalancing is enough to make it difficult for the other person to find centre³⁵. I had never experienced anything like this before and found myself utterly confused.

Harmonization

The subtlety of awareness and intent needed to perceive the sophisticated and relatively effortless movement of my own body as I moved Lou made a remarkable impression on me. The state of the mind and its flexibility affects my movement, how I come into contact with others, and how I interpenetrate with the world. What makes these movements and meetings wholesome? What shapes the mind in such a way that my movements, my contact and meeting with the world are imbued with care for myself and others? As I hold my new son Theo I am challenged by these questions in moments of exhausted frustration.

³⁵ The quick alternation of vectors coming into the body is apparently so disorienting to the nervous system and the untrained body that it will tense as it tries to regain balance, making it even easier to push the person off balance.

it's 3 a.m.

he's up again and crying

he's been fed, changed, bounced, soothed, sung to, fed again, and swaddled

the white noise machine isn't working

nothing is working

the frustration builds and i can feel myself getting impatient

i plead for him to be quiet and to sleep

inside i'm cursing at him and sense the urge to shake him out of his worked up state

the muscles in my arms feel primed with tension

they await the unleashing of this anger

during a brief lull in the crying

i feel the heavy, dull buzz of sleep deprivation

feeling the weight of Theo's body in my arms, I allow his weight to sink into my core

i allow my weight to connect to the ground

and find a way to support him with as little strain as possible

Theo has calmed down now and is drifting to sleep

the anger becomes clear as i watch the thoughtstream:

"i should be getting sleep right now, i shouldn't have to deal with this exhaustion, i should be fresh and alert for tomorrow, this child should respect and obey me..."

as I support his weight and trust the ground to support this holding

the anger dissipates

and there is love

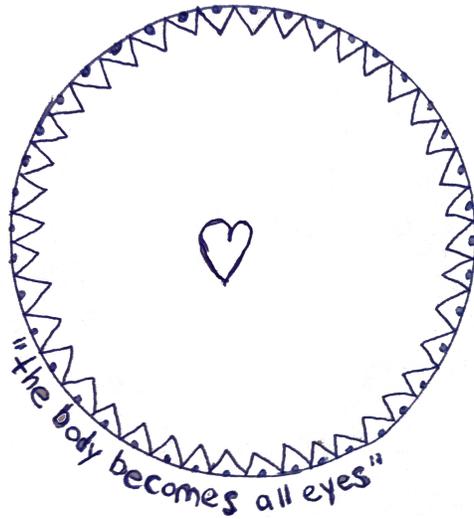


Figure 3: 'The Body Becomes All Eyes'

The mind is shaped by our feeling-attitudes towards ourselves and others. The condition of our hearts matters. When we are fueled by anger, our movements become aggressive. Needing to protect our vulnerability out of fear, the movements become defensive and rigid. Fueled by compassion and care, our movements become supportive and connective. Needing to prove our worth and status, the movements become domineering and unresponsive to others. Attending to the physical and the sensuous is, as my experience with Theo shows, a gateway to the heart, to our suffering and a liberating awareness. My way of holding points to the way of my heart's condition and vice versa. Morehi Ueshiba, the founder of the martial art of Aikido ('the Way of unifying with life energy') said that the primary goal of the martial artist is to achieve mind-body unity, not to defeat the opponent, but to join with him or her so that the *heart* of all involved may be transformed (Ueshiba, 1988). To transform the heart we need to see how the attacker and the lover is not 'out there' but within (W. Palmer, 1994, p. 6). Neigong prepares us to meet and stay in contact with the lover and attacker within and simply be our true nature, an all-encompassing awareness.

For our original nature to come to full fruition, the life-energy that emanates from the heart must harmonize with our emotions, intentions, and physical actions. Various obstacles prevent the natural flow of energy from our innermost centre outward into the world and from the outside world into our heart. Wounding in early childhood,

disembodied experience resulting from splits between mind and body, and environments that suppress the animating force springing from centre (including family, schooling, and society) all contribute to psychic numbing, loss of meaning and personal purpose, interpersonal violence, fractured communities, and dissatisfaction with life. Attending to the distress and suffering of a heart restricted in its movement invites us to journey at and beyond the edges of prohibited experience. Some edges are personal and include doubt and fear of our own potential, working in difficult emotional channels such as anger or shame, and being in our bodies. Others are social and include oppressive patterns of domination and submission and the privileging of rational thought over other ways of knowing. Our edges represent opportunities for opening and expanding the domain of the heart from the inside out and the outside in.

In Daoist terms, the practitioner, through the integration of opposites (mind/body, open/close, up/down, left/right, inside/outside) is able to realize his or her nature (*dao*) without effort (*wuwei*). *Wuwei* refers to the manifestation of power (*de*) without having to strain or exert force but from the "natural unfolding of things" or 'Way' (*dao*) (Rossi, 1997, p. 5):

de indicates power in the sense of the possession of specific properties and intrinsic strengths, such that one is able to express one's own nature in a spontaneous way . . . the *de* of a person is the potential of acting in accordance with *dao*. This ability to act in accordance with *dao* also implies an external resonance: the possibility of drawing others to yourself through this power so that, for example, it is possible to govern without resorting to force or coercion . . . people with *de* possess an aptitude and natural abilities such that by adhering to *dao* they influence the surroundings and improve them even without acting/doing. *Dao*, the Way, is the unfolding of *de*; it is made up of the flow of things in which each is brought to completion; in human endeavours it consists of actions that favour the maturation of both individuals and things in conformity with their respective natures. (Rossi, 2007, p. 5-6)

Neigong training supports the alignment of the bodymind's potential to move freely *with* what is arising in the moment through developing what is known in Chinese as the six harmonies (*liu he*). The first three are internal harmonies and concern the heart,

intention, energy, and strength. The second three are external harmonies concerning the co-ordinated movement of joints. The basic idea of the harmonies is that our present context and relations to the world, how we feel, how we think, and how we physically move are all connected. The goal of training is to refine and integrate these aspects of being so that they operate as a whole.

Heart/Mind leads Intention

The heart/mind is the deepest layer or sheath and is our desire to live, feel, connect with the world, experience and unfold our purpose or calling. It is deeply rooted in the emotional and instinctual body and the unconscious. It is the fluid center, kokoro, the total life force of the person, the existential core I keep referring to. The intention is the psychosomatic constitution of the person and, depending on our upbringing and history, will be more or less attuned and responsive to the movement of the heart. Developmental trauma, conditioned ways of being and belief systems that close down or deny access to the expression of our nature are unintegrated pathways or doorways to a harmony between the heart and the bodymind. For example, in simply becoming aware of and feeling the suffering of being driven by anger and a belief that I should not have to deal with a crying baby, I opened up to a holding and supportive gesture of love for myself and for Theo. There is a clear psychological dimension to the neigong training that involves being curious about our thoughts and emotions. The critical element to this awareness is perceiving the relationship of thoughts and emotions in the context of our bodies as the container and matrix for thinking and feeling.

Intention leads Energy

Our ability to regulate our movements and our bodies in ways that support the heart will directly affect the flow of energy through the bodymind. If we are continually tensed up from fear of being with our anger at having something important taken from us, the energy in our body will quickly be depleted and we will become weak and ill. By intentionally relaxing and activating different parts of the body, we can regulate how much physical energy we expend and conserve and the pathways along which the

energy can travel. Neigong training places emphasis on attending to the coupling of the body with emotions and thoughts by developing a heightened capacity for voluntary, simultaneous muscle control throughout the entire body. Control is read here as the ability to engage and relax. Neigong requires tremendous intention to the extent that heightened awareness is directed into the body in very specific ways (see Appendix)³⁶. In a technical sense, we can develop strength by building up our muscles with weights, however through neigong the focus is on refining how the mind can increase “the quality and intensity of cerebral control of the muscles without trying to increase their size” (Tokitsu, 2012). The goal of this training is to develop a body that ‘becomes all eyes’ (Zarrilli, 1998) wherein the intention is an “inner eye” that ‘looks’ out from the center of the body (dantien) to the extremities and beyond (Zarrilli, 2009). The mind is thus not something located in the brain, but distributed throughout the body.

Our state of mind is thus central to our capacity to mobilize our entire bodies in movement and “unless we attain a particular mental state, we won’t be able to activate our body in a way such that all our muscles form a single, unique whole” (Tokitsu, 2012, para 6). We must train the mind’s capacity to be “concentrated in dispersion”:

When you try, for example, to activate your thigh muscles, you find that certain areas of the body don’t respond to your command, because you can’t control them at will. When you try to exercise given areas, you realise that you don’t know how to activate [or relax] certain muscles voluntarily . . . Unless we go through this stage of observing what happens inside ourselves, it is impossible to go on to the next stage. Accordingly, partial exercises are indispensable before going on to global, whole-body, exercise. The state of whole-body integration reminds me of a zen teaching . . . “To see a thousand leaves on a tree at a single glance.” If you look at leaves one by one, you can’t take in the foliage as a whole. If you look at the whole, you can’t take in the uniqueness of the single leaf . . . Here, instead of leaves, we’re concerned with muscles. (Tokitsu, 2012, para 7)

36 The physical activity involved is nothing like that involved in lifting weights, running on a treadmill, or dancing. We can develop strength by building up our muscles with weights, however through neigong the focus is on refining how the mind can increase “the quality and intensity of cerebral control of the muscles without trying to increase their size” (Tokitsu, 2012, para 8)

Training thus requires that we can both isolate the activation and relaxation of specific muscles, but to do so in the context of an awareness of the entire gestalt (whole) of the rest of the body. Practiced over a long-period of time one can, through yoga and internal martial arts such as taijiquan, "develop the bodymind's perceptual awareness to a point in which one literally "thinks with the body and acts with the mind"" (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 76).

*in the midst of a grove
standing between trees and dead fallen leaves
the shadows and staggered depth
separate the salal from the birch
and a dancing sea of seeds
dangling at the ends of browned grasses*

*it's been so long since i've been home like this
i see the wave of wind tossle across the trees
eyes swell with water
these are not the usual tears
they are for sight gone dry
from forgetting how to be
and how to stand
and how to move from a place
within
- s. park*

Energy Leads Strength

Strength is the manifestation of energy in movement, which is directed by the intent and the heart. Knowing how to conserve, extend, and guide energy through the body can develop a resilient body capable of expanding, contracting, and moving in three-dimensions with great skill. The world, physically and psychologically, places a burden upon us and shows us where we are straining to hold it up or have collapsed under its weight. In taijiquan, the advancing press and yield of our opponent teaches us where we are not aware of our own bodies and of what they are connected to. When we

cannot sense, transform or meet these forces, our body is not "all eyes." The places in our body where we are rigid, tense, and holding hard against the burden become manifest. Or we have collapsed our structure and cannot meet the force in any engaged way. In both cases, we restrict the flow of energy in the body. The restriction points at a deeper level to our emotions, intentions, and thoughts being somehow stuck and unable to move in response to the heart. My understanding of psycho-motor development matches this point. When we go to manifest whole-body relaxation and whole-body activation, there are blind spots, places where we are collapsed and tensed. In the work of creating an exceptional level of body-mind connection, we come up against obstacles. There are weak spots in our postures and movements. We need to work with the bodymind in a way that addresses the collapsed or holding structures in the muscles. My understanding of psycho-motor development matches this understanding and I refer the reader to my notes on this³⁷.

37 I want to address some features of psychomotor development that are critical underpinnings to the kind of embodied inner work training I am advocating. It is important to link body movement awareness to a sense of self and connection in the world otherwise any discussion of practices devolves into techniques and programs disconnected from the issues, struggles and existential questions of the person who is moving. Such questions concern how to move forward in life, how to stand our ground, how to yield to what emerges, how to resist that which threatens, and how to grasp for that which satisfies and fulfills. I look here to Bodydynamics, a psychotherapeutic system developed by a number of Scandinavian somatic psychotherapists who have mapped how various muscles in the body relate to ego development and psycho-social integration, defined in terms of a balance between dignity and mutual connection (Bernhardt, 2004). Mutual connection is our inter-being, our energetic connection to everything in the cosmos. Dignity is our basic goodness and our capacity for becoming whole, unique and integrated beings that can shape and be shaped by the cosmos.

The extensive research from Bodydynamics shows how various overlapping developmental stages and affective and cognitive functions are linked to specific motor functions. The early movement patterning involved in rolling, crawling, reaching out, pulling in or pushing away play a key role in our cognitive development. The first two years of life are concerned with existence, needs and autonomy. From the ages of two to nine, development occurs around themes of will, sexuality, and forming opinions. "Taking a stand," "setting boundaries," "pushing boundaries" are embodied acts. Later stages consider relationships and performance in groups and with peers.

Other systems are part of our development (language, nervous system, etc.), but "muscle activity has the unique property of being mediated by the voluntary nervous system and therefore reflects the growth of ego/voluntary processes (Bernhardt, Bentzen & Isaacs, 2004, p. 143, their emphasis). Our experience in relationships with our caregivers and others impacts our psycho-motor development and capacity to engage in the actions that support dignity and mutual connection. One example is that of over-protective and under-nurturing care-givers. If "the first step is a first step away from the mother" (Mahler et al., 1975, in Bernhardt et al. 2004, p. 137), the child's emerging autonomy will be effected by either kind of parenting style and this can be reflected in the sensory-motor realm. The child of the over-protective care-giver will have difficulty walking away if he or she is smothered and his or her movement limited; the muscles

*calming the toes creates
just a bit more stability
and a more substantial sense
of the ground below me
i can rest some more up my upper body weight
across the span
the arc between between my legs*

that need to be developed for autonomy are neglected, "give up" after repeated attempts, and an imprint is left. These muscles become hypo-responsive and are unable to support the embodiment of autonomy. The child of the under-nurturing parent may be forced to become autonomous quite quickly and develop a rigid and overly engaged, hyper-responsive musculature imprint. These muscles learn to not relax because there is reduced sensory experience of being held and supported while becoming autonomous.

From the Bodydynamic perspective, muscles that are relatively neutral (not hyper or hyporesponsive) make movement and "psychological resources" (e.g., the capacity to say 'no') more actively available. Developing body awareness, activating hypo-responsive muscles, and releasing hyper-responsive muscles becomes integral to developing these resources. This body awareness is, in effect, "a bridge between thought, action, and emotion" (p. 138). Our embodiment is essentially connected to our deepest sense of self. We can experience a strong sense of self when we have our attention centered through the core of our bodies, from our pelvic floor to the top of the head. Our awareness can extend beyond the core to include the rest of our body and our environment.

However, as Aposhyan (1999) points out: "the high level of stimulation in the world outside us frequently pulls our attention out of our bodies altogether...Our attentional field is not large enough to include both our bodies and the environment . . . When we are not literally feeling our bodies, we cannot make self-informed decisions...On an individual level, we lose access to much of our intuition, creativity, and internal development impulses. On a relationship level, dependency, codependency, and lack of individuation are the result." (p. 59). Dignity and mutual connection, the ability to remain grounded in one's self while open and available to others in the world, is thus a complex endeavour, especially for those who have limited access to the somatic resources required to feel oneself's core or to make contact with the world.

These resources are important because there is a relationship between our awareness of our muscles and higher level cognitive functioning and language (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). Lisbeth Marcher, one of the founders of Bodydynamics notes that: "the brain takes a movement and sees how far it can go with it, how it can make use of it, how it can play with it: "If I move my arm in this way, what happens? What happens when I'm with other people? Oh! If I push them away, I feel better. What happens if I tell them to go away, if I use language to do what I did with my body? Hey, it works!" Thus language begins to extend what begins in the body, and yet it is still rooted there." (p. 117)

*my gaze steadies
being pressed upon by another
sensations inflating a three sixty bodyscape bubble
whose inside edges are touched
with a curiosity that leaves no curve unknown*

*belly soft, round, full
a juicy ripe pear whose flesh
binds the progeny of movement's origins
and offers rest to a chest
holding the weight of sadness*

*fear and panic are borne
somewhere in the solar plexus
chest contracts, eyes become unsteady
and my stance uprooted by
the vibration of my questions
a crumpled awareness, now fixated:
what will I lose as I become a father?
am I worthy?
can I do this?
can i create a vessel capable of holding all this?*

breath(e). steady. expand.

primordial confidence

*swollen plump flesh
balloons out around the bones
blood now thicker
with the pulse of my heart
coursing through to fingertip
ends
s.park*

As the mind goes into the depths of the body and into space around me, I can feel an inner calm and be in a state of high receptivity that facilitates a perception of the entire space around me as being continuous with my body. I extend into this space and then I am, for moments, the space itself. There is always movement, even here where I feel as if I have settled³⁸. Fears and desires speak and move with a more startling clarity. I notice how my awareness of my body and the space around shifts with these fears; my mind can be arrested upon them and I feel crumpled. And, sensing their subtle vibration through my body, I can also surrender to them by allowing my body to be the primordial container that does not repress or indulge in limiting perceptions of myself.

Standing Gong Practice (Zhan-Zhuang)

Standing gongs (*gong* meaning work or practice) or *zhan zhuang* ('standing like a pole or post') are the primary means for "training the transmission of core body strength throughout the entire body or to specific parts of the body" (L. Crockett, personal communication, 2013)³⁹. Standing gongs are practiced over a long period of time and, when effectively corrected by a skilled teacher, allow the practitioner to stand (and then move) with as little muscular effort and mental tension as possible⁴⁰. From a mechanical

38 Buddhist teacher Pema Chodron (1991) writes that there are two kinds of human neurosis; getting caught up in either samsara (occurrence) or nirvana (stillness). In samsara we try to get away from our difficulty and pain by filling our lives with an endless and inexhaustible pursuit for comfort, certainty and pleasure. We like life hot and full of drama to feed on. Peace, quiet and freedom can also trap us when we prefer to not be disturbed by noise and activity in the mind and in life. We like the water to be still and cool and avoid what might disturb this. We can save ourselves a lot of agony, Chodron says, if we see our ultimate perfection through "realizing that samsara and nirvana are one, not preferring stillness or occurrence but being able to live fully with both" (p. 102). To always be at the whim of our hungers, aversions and desires is to stumble through life in a fog. To only rest inside witness consciousness is to be a passive observer.

39 Lou Crockett notes that "standing gongs have a long history in Asian health and martial systems. There are numerous variations. Every village/school has its own take on what it is, how to do it and what it's for. The majority of information on the web and elsewhere links the practice of standing to "Qi Gong" practice. Qi Gong exercises rely primarily on visualization and breath control to cultivate "Qi" and or "energy." (L. Crockett, personal communication, 2013)

40 The particular practice of standing gongs I am studying with Lou Crockett of Blue Mountain Taiji Neigong are drawn from the training techniques and methods of the Chen family system of taijiquan, most specifically from Crockett's study with/of Chen Family Standard Bearer Chen

perspective, effective standing gong practice allows the weight of the human body to dynamically rest upon the skeletal frame of the body and upon the earth while simultaneously generating a rebounding force up and out to all other points of the body. The ability to spontaneously adjust the bodymind to form force vectors from any point of the body to a single point on the ground is strengthened. When the bodymind is integrated “it will be able to resist any force, no matter where it comes from, and it can explode in all directions too” (Tokitsu, 2012). (See Appendix for a brief guide on the practice of Standing Gongs)

The capacity to form the structure that allows for the above relies on developing a strong and flexible core. Crockett points out that the muscular core around our trunk is central because for all of our movements, “we need a secure fixed point from which to apply the force” (L. Crockett, personal communication, 2013). If we have a strong core, we can “extend this strength to all the extremities, while allocating minimum work load to the large muscle groups and keeping the joints free of local tension.”

Xiaowang, Grand Master Feng Zhiqiang, an indoor student³² of Chen Fake and Grand Master Zhang Xue Xin, an indoor student of Master Feng Zhiqiang



Figure 4. Standing Gong Posture

*the press of the bubbling well in my foot
makes pliant contact
through sole, soul and soil
lighting up my legs*

*wrapping, coiling, expanding, contracting
muscle-tendons massage bones
like a wet towel spun in the change room
heavy and sprung for action*

contradictions about in all directions

*heels out but not out
going up and down*

...the fly lazily whizzes and buzzes by

*the cat at the end of the alleyway
sees me as i drop my shoulders
and my back expands into a rubber band
from hand to hand*

*as if being light pressed upon by hands from all directions
and meeting the palms in equal measure with the intent
to extend beyond the edges of this sphere
blood rushes to finger tips, swollen
jaw eases, eyes soft and unblinking*

*i am the space
pierced by the space
resting in space
phenomena lose all names*

Releasing expectations and muscle tension, letting go of the effort to make something special happen, and relinquishing ideas about what I think I need to support me are of part trusting that I am already well supported by the ground and the frame of my body. Setting up my body in just the right way for it to feel like it can rest through the skeletal structure and on the ground takes great control over specificity of which muscles to engage and release. The fine analysis of how each part of the body is being held, neglected, opened, closed, and so on is essential, however, at various points it breaks my mind's agenda of control. Control becomes an impossible agenda of trying to make something special happen, which starts to create it's own resistance and instability in my body. A belief system surfaces and says that I am not good enough, I am never going to be able to master this or anything else, and that I better give up now.

I continue to stand and at some point the impossibility of figuring out how to stand on the ground gives way to a profound and simple feeling of *really* being on the ground without any effort. I learn in this moment to trust that there is something in the background of my conscious awareness that knows how to support this body in an unefforted way and that the solid support of the ground can be trusted to hold me.

Without trying to figure out how all the parts of my body work, however, I don't think I would experience this peculiar sense of being supported. By going to the limits of what I perceive I can do, I come to a place where acting intuition becomes active. Standing is something done to me; I am *understood*. To simply let go and trust without having developed the ability for conscious control of the bodymind runs the risk that we collapse the structure of the body into even more strained positions; it takes a lot of energy to hold a body in a limp position! The *idea* of letting go and trusting that the body will stand with full gravity upon the earth is different from a subtler and subtler reality of sensing in the body of a visceral giving-way.

To see significant results from the standing gongs, daily practice and ongoing verbal and physical feedback from an experienced instructor is essential. Initially, beginner students stand for no more than five minutes and can expect to feel discomfort and tension throughout the body, especially in the legs. At intermediate levels of practice, the practitioner can feel a sense of expansion, density to the body and a feeling as if being a "large beach ball that expands outward laterally when gently pressed on the top against the ground" (Crockett, personal communication). Further along in one's practice, simple movements are added with a focus on learning how to generate and extend the force required to make the movement from the core. These movement practices are called Silk Reeling exercises.

Silk Reeling and Push-Hands (Tui Shou)

Finding centre is only the beginning. As Strozzi-Heckler (1997) points out:

The state of center is a doorway, a place to begin feeling our deeper urges, our possibilities in the world, the expansiveness of our excitement, and also our need

to be nourished in quiet, contained ways. Because it is not an end in itself, it is not necessary to spend forever perfecting center, [otherwise we only increase] narcissism . . . If we stop here . . . we lose sight of the larger vision, and we lose our ability to expand grow. (p. 82-85)

Silk reeling sequences are designed to extend energy from the core to the extremities⁴¹. Using spiraling movements, the spiral binding of the muscles, fascia and tendons around the legs, torso, back, and arms is uncoiled and recoiled away from and back towards the core⁴². Opening the hips and the inguinal area (*kua*) is critical to learning how to move and twist the core and significant focus is placed on stretching and conditioning the hips, lower back, lower abdomen and upper quads, psoas and gluteus muscles. Various exercises exaggerate the outer movements of the arms and legs to gain an awareness of the subtle internal movements that drive the action from the core. They require dedicated, daily practice over many years to gain a basic mastery and masters continue to refine it. To embody the yin-yang principle of *taiqi* means to know how all the joints in the body open and close with respect to each other in movement⁴³. The whole purpose

41 "Silk Reeling" (ChanSiGong/ChanSiJing) was not likely communicated to Yang Luchan, the progenitor of the ubiquitous Yang-style taijiquan, or he did not teach it and is thus is unique to the Chen style (Chen Tai Chi Center, 2004)

42 Lou Crockett writes that the spiral strength is trained: "by consciously adding very light gentle twists outward with the mental intent of pushing out from the core, and conversely with a pulling intent with the twist moving toward the core. With a very relaxed body the spiral movements are very gentle and done at the edge of perception so that there is a sensation accompanying the effort but very little actual movement. This is initially trained one arm or leg at a time, until there is a recognizable sensation associated with the action. Then with both arms, then both legs, then alternating and combining both arm and leg on the same side of the body, then alternating left leg right arm, and then right leg left arm, and so on. Gently twisting around a vertical axis with the arms raised and rotating simultaneously trains alternating complementary rotations and connections throughout the body. It generates core strength while allowing the entire body to sink calmly onto the ground and engage the ground for stability. This exercise helps to reinforce the concept of moving (turning) with only the torso, while the hips remain loose but immobile" (personal communication). For a more in-depth look at training Silk Reeling movement see Neijia practitioner and writer Mike Sigman's blog at <http://mikesigman.blogspot.ca/>.

43 The silk reeling exercises have yin and yang aspects that can be used in combat, often in combination. In yin mode, the condensing and compressing motions of the spiralling body neutralize incoming forces by "turning it into an empty place" (Chen Tai Chi Center, 2004). In yang mode: "the spiral movement "collects" muscle force from around the whole body by means of a sort of rising "shock wave" that rides on top of normal body movement. It is first dropped down from the dantian (diaphragm area) to the legs then "bounced" back up the body with additional energy added by untwining the torso as the "wave" rises. Finally this force is

of learning how to simultaneously co-ordinate the opening and closing of all the joints in the body is to allow the core of the body to extend into or yield to another person or object with great sensitivity and suppleness.

Beyond the boundaries of my body, this co-ordination helps me "energetically flow outward without being rigid or frenzied" (Strozzi-Heckler, 1997, p. 98) and allows me get to know quite intimately what or who it is that I am in contact with how as well as my own internal state. Engaging with objects that have some 'give' such as a tree or another person offers invaluable insights into how integrated my bodymind is and how well the strength from the core is both grounded through the feet and out through the arms and hands⁴⁴.

Onion Inquiry

As I place the onion on the cutting board in front of me, I can feel my body relaxing and connecting to the ground through my left leg. My shoulders drop and belly opens. I breath. As I pick up the knife, I can feel the depths of my

"discharged" in the extremities of the body (fist, elbow, shoulder) on contact with an opponent in a frightening pulse of concentrated momentum." (Chen Tai Chi Centre, 2004)

Daoist master Chang San-Feng offered the following description of what correct silk reeling would yield for the taijiquan practitioner:

"Each part of your body should be connected to every other part . . . The internal energy should be extended, vibrated like the beat of a drum. The spirit should be condensed in toward the centre of your body . . . When performing taiqi it should be perfect; allow no defect. The form should be smooth with no unevenness, and continuous, allowing no interruptions . . . The internal energy, qi, roots at the feet, then transfers through the legs and is controlled from the waist, moving eventually through the back to the arms and fingertips . . . When transferring the qi from your feet to your waist, you body must operate as if all the parts were one; this allows you to move forward and backward freely with control of balance and position . . . You should also follow the taiqi principle of opposites: when you move upward, the mind must be aware of down; when moving forward, the mind also thinks of moving back; when shifting to the left side, the mind should simultaneously notice the right side . . . (Liao, as cited in Zarrilli, 2009, pp. 75–76)

44 One way of training is to hold the forearm out horizontally at chest height away from the body and against the tree. The weight of the core is "dropped" into the front or back leg and the back is slightly arced forming the shape of a bow. "This provides a curved path from the contact point on the wall to whichever foot is bearing the body weight. The curve can be equated to bowing an archery bow. As the string is drawn the bow curves, storing energy" (L. Crockett, personal communication, 2013). The objective in this exercise is to extend this stored energy into the tree without using the muscles in the shoulders, arms and legs to generate the force.

lower abdomen pull up, then my mid-back and latisimus muscles slightly engage to form a structure capable of holding the knife without the use of my shoulders. My right arm extends out in front of me and I can feel how my whole body is supporting the weight of the knife. I pierce the tip of the knife into the onion and the muscles and joints make numerous changes. My right elbow rotates down, closing my armpit in the front and opening my back. This movement is supported by the closing of my right inguinal area and the opening of my lower back. These joints open and close as I move the knife and allow a continuous connection from the the tip of the knife, through my core and into the ground. I breath in and feel my body expand and become full and exhale as a wave of contractions courses out from my core and into the core of the onion. The cut is smooth and precise and I can feel the knife piercing through each layer of the onion. The whole experience is intensely erotic and I feel very connected to this onion. I feel care for the onion. I feel that my whole bodymind attitude towards it matters in some way.

s. park

Tui Shou or push-hands is a very complex exercise for training the silk reeling movements, strengthening the core, remaining relaxed while in dynamic contact with another person, learning how to extend and recoil force way from and into the core, and develop the freedom of mind required to make numerous transitions in the muscles and joints and throughout the body. Push hands undoes one's instinct for resisting force with force and teaches the practitioner to yield to force and redirect it. A partner, unlike a tree, can "give immediate verbal feedback on what is felt and not felt" (L. Crockett, personal communication, 2013). A partner is able to feel the difference between force being extended from the core, which will feel heavy and soft, or if it is being generated from local muscle tension, which will feel rigid and brittle.

Push-hands is a pre-combat exercise that also trains the ability to read the intent and follow the ki of another person through tracking the movement of his or her body through my structure. With a felt sense of my core connected to the ground and radiating out the arms and into the opponent's structure, the core of the opponent can be tracked, compressed, and uprooted with little effort. Push-hands is a serious and playful

mode of contemplative inquiry as it requires heightened sensitivity to movement, sensation and space, a calm mind, a relaxed and alert body, a sense of one's own grounding, and a willingness to be vulnerable to another person. You both enter and are being entered by the mind of the other, a real practice of interpenetration and participatory consciousness.

Push-hands represents for me a critical juncture where the practice can move more towards fighting and learning the advanced skills and mindset of real combat, or it can lean towards forms of engagement that are focused on deepening self-awareness and integration, healing of self and other, intersubjective inquiry, play, and community development. In my teaching, I am not employing the particular forms of *neigong* and *taijiquan*. I am not a martial arts educator nor am I teaching my students to become martial artists. I do, however bring my heart-body-mind into the classroom and aim to work with my inner world and the outer environment in ways that are consistent with what I do in my psychophysical practices. *Neigong* and *taijiquan* are a foundation, practice, metaphor and expression of integrating our entire being, and for the educator interested in integration, the classroom too is a field that is much like the individual body-mind.

Chapter 6 - Teaching and Learning in the Dao-Field: MetaSkills

Stances, Postures and Dispositions in Teaching

I see the classroom as a dojo, as a place where my students and I can work out some of our questions about who we are and who is asking the questions. With a dojo mindset I can develop extraordinary capacities for being present, doing inner work in the moment, and be responsive to what emerges and has the potential to grow. My ability as an educator to work with and include whatever arises in ourselves and the classroom helps me notice opportunities where my students and I can reclaim hidden and discarded parts of ourselves and become more whole. These abilities for sensing, improvising and attending are rooted in my corporeality. Stephen Smith's *The bearing of inquiry in teacher education: The S.F.U. experience* (2004) is a wonderful articulation of how curriculum improvisation is known and enacted through the stances, postures, and dispositions that disclose our "felt tendencies, body inclinations, postural leanings and alignments which, in turn, allow for the physical positions, motions and expressions of working with and living alongside" our students (p. 10). Our stances:

directly shape the situations in which we find ourselves and create particular, perspectival points of interest — standpoints, in other words. The circumstances that arise are more than mere happenstances. They are where we find our footings, standing firm or wavering in our resolves, and seeking to understand that which surrounds us and in which we are implicated. (Smith, 2004, p. 18)

As my study of *neigong* reveals, there are also stances that almost imperceptibly switch back and forth but can ultimately be intended towards moving, disrupting, and disorienting the other or yielding to the movements of the other in a controlled, relaxed and subtle way. There is the flexibility to shift or remain firm without force. As I become calm and steady in my breathing and posture during practice sessions, I begin to touch the margins of experience; those parts of my body, those contractions of the feeling heart, and those yearnings for something unmet come to life and I listen. At times, these experiences are a bit of a surprise and uncomfortable because they seem foreign; they

are not part of what I want to deal with today, they are things I think I have already dealt with, or I take them to be a threat to the sense of myself as a good, intelligent and in-control person. They appear as not-self, as enemies, and before I can assess and discriminate the particular content of the experience, the calmness of body and mind is disturbed. My breathing becomes more shallow and erratic. Small muscles clench tightly on bones. Judgements and alarms start to go off.

The physical body is a microcosm of the classroom, which has a number of different and interacting voices, feelings, tensions, and potentials; some of which are at times dominant and others more marginal. My experience of being with others, particularly those representing marginal voices to my own view of the world, evokes similar experiences to what I described above during *neigong* practice. I see the person in front of me and I feel and hear his or her words, which include the tone, pitch, timing and body language. If I am paying attention and the person is making some critical remark about me or something I feel invested in, I can notice the twisting in my guts or clenching in my jaw. I may feel the subtle urge to leave the situation or defend my position as my heart rate increases and eyes begin to look for potential exits.

Some part of me wants to stay curious to the unfolding events, which I can sometimes support by adjusting my posture to be more alert, relaxing my entire musculature, and breathing more deeply and smoothly. I feel more grounded and capable of letting the sensations of distress course through my body, being with the judgements and evaluations (positive and negative) of myself and the person in front of me, sensing the different ways I might want to relate to the situation, and staying connected and receptive to the other person. Smith (2004) describes such corporeal intentions as dispositions that reflect the educator's interest in "being at the disposal of others...[and] adopt[ing] a posture and position ourselves in ways that are mindful of not disposing too readily of the perspectives of others." (p. 21)

Different responses might arise out of the shifting gestalt of my experience. Sometimes I react out of a familiar pattern to acquiesce to the criticism and attempt to make the person feel better so that I am liked. Or I may put up a wall and speak in a detached and rational way as a way of protecting my vulnerability and letting the person know that I'm not interested in relating emotionally (a form of rejection). In some

situations, a genuine sense of compassion and empathy arises and I feel myself connecting to my own experience and the other person with an open heart. I may still disagree with what I am hearing, feel like acquiescing to or resisting the other person, but I feel the movement of a heart that is responsive rather than reactive. In these moments, I feel a strong sense of accepting and trusting the fundamental goodness of my own being and that of the other person. It is out of the space of these moments that I sense a piercing realization of my own potential and that of the other person. I think here of how my postures can be defensive, collapsed, or ones that join with, follow, or lead the other. My postures are “carriages” and “ways of holding the questions” in ways that might be “straightforward, direct, soft, solicitous, obsequious, circuitous, or even furtive and underhanded” (Smith, 2004, p. 19). As an educator, researcher and artist, how do I “pose certain issues” and when do I “impose” myself on others? (p. 19)

It becomes increasingly evident in reflecting on the body in this way that it is not simply the skin, organs, flesh, bones, and fluid of an isolated individual, but an interembodied matrix of bodies (Weiss, 1999) that includes the "corporeal body, the phenomenological body, the inscribed body, the politicized body, the signified body, the sexualized body" (Cancienne & Snowber, 2003, p. 238)⁴⁵. The bodymind is a subjectively experienced body that is not only a physiological reality, but one that is thoroughly constituted by the world, our immediate contexts and relationships, and by the conscious and unconscious aspects of who we are. How then, do our postures, dispositions and stances arise from being attentive to this complex, shifting matrix? How does a living pedagogy that dances between the known and the unknown come to life? How do our intended movements of thought and bodily thinking join with the groundless ground of the Dao?

The Dreambody

⁴⁵ For an examination of the individual, social and political body as three lenses for mediating arts-based inquiries see Davison, J. (2004) Embodied Knowledge: Possibilities and Constraints in Arts Education and Curriculum. In L. Bresler (Ed.) *Knowing Bodies, Moving Minds* (pp. 197-212). Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Arnold Mindell (1982) uses the term *dreambody* to indicate that the sensations, impulses, movements, dreams, fantasies and thoughts are inseparable from the body and the world it is immersed in⁴⁶. The dreambody is thus a *field*. Fields have no boundaries; they "have neither an inside nor an outside but permeate everything, like . . . an atmosphere that has no well-defined limits" (Arnold Mindell, 1992, p. 16). Groups and classrooms are fields because they are composed of dreams, feelings, assumptions, beliefs, and roles. Classrooms are microcosms of the world where the many different ways of being and expressing our nature have the potential to emerge. Some of these parts are conscious and allowed for in the group or culture while others exist below the surface or are marginalized. For example, the attitude towards anger in the west is often that it should not be expressed. Although a healthy emotion with a valuable role in supporting health human interaction, we deny it attention and expression and actually shame others for feeling it or showing. Denying the wisdom of anger, we enact environments that support passive-aggressive behaviour and push people into violence and explosive rages as a way of releasing the pent up energy of anger. Whenever lies beneath the surface, remains unseen or is excluded is still part of the field affecting a group and will exert an influence on what is happening.

46 The dreambody is composed of different dimensions of awareness and includes "temporal and non-temporal experience, chronological and non-chronological time, doing and being, particle and field energies" (Arnold Mindell, 1982, p. 164). The dual nature of the dreambody, Mindell says is similar to the difference between a quantum field/particle view of reality and a Newtonian particle view. In the Newtonian worldview, events are seen as being governed by cause and effect principles in which world-as-machine could be conceptualized at the level of atoms molecules as billiard balls that bounced off each other in predictable ways. As physics went a level deeper in electrons and neutrons, a different world was glimpsed, one of paradoxes where matter was simultaneously particle and waves/fields of energy. Further, as Heisenberg proved, it is impossible to study quantum events without making perturbations upon them. For many of us, who still operate with a worldview of linear, cause and effect rationality, the abstract, symbolic world of quantum mechanics seems impractical, obscure but intriguing.

The difficulties that quantum physics has had in gaining credibility, Mindell says, is parallel to an understanding of the dreambody: "just as a material particle is no longer viewed as a little ball in space, so the idea of the real body can no longer be considered absolute" (Arnold Mindell, 1982, p. 13). Inquiring into the dreambody requires that we let it express itself. If we ask "classical questions" about it, the "dreambody experience is destroyed by forcing it to fit into collective definitions" (p. 13). The truth of our descriptions of the dream body and the objective, physical body, Mindell says, can only be assessed from within their own realm of observation. He says that "confusion arises only when one body's description is treated more importantly than the other's or when questions pertaining to one body are asked about the other body" (Arnold Mindell, 1984p. 11).

Jung and those who followed in his footsteps paved the way for a much deeper understanding of the role of the unconscious in balancing the psyche and disclosing our interpenetration with a dynamic cosmos. He said the unknown and unfamiliar is "dangerous only when our conscious attitude towards it becomes hopelessly false [and] this danger only grows in the measure that we practice repressions" (Jung, 1955/1933, p. 17). How do we become aware of and integrate the various voices, roles and perspectives that are marginalized in ourselves, in our classrooms and in our students?

For the Daoist, the field is the *dao*, the source of all perceptions and actions. The field, like a permeating fabric, manifests as lines, wrinkles, and crevices in the fabric. When we try to move outside the crevices, that is, try to avoid our present moment experience, we meet resistance and conflict. Daoist wisdom encourages the adept to move with the lines, which, for the martial artist and the educator alike, means living "according to both inner feelings and sensitivity to outer situations" (Arnold Mindell, 1992, p. 17). The field is only "potentially wise" (Arnold Mindell, 1992, p. 18) to the extent that it represents "possibilities of perception and action" (Cohen & Bai, 2007, p. 7). The possibilities for action and perception are generated by the evolving, dynamic nature of the *dao*, which can be both destructive through the emergence of conflicts and constructive by creating connection and cohesion. These dynamics are not good or bad, only the field trying to complete and balance itself. From this perspective there is no pathology as each event has a reason for its expression and represents something wanting to shift or evolve.

Fields are "a mass of unconscious abilities" (p. 18), that are only potentially wise because without some awareness and work with what manifests in the field, we are not likely to see the wisdom contained within the conflicts, symptoms, attractions, movements and dreams. Jung (1955/1933), for example, saw that dreams offered information about the inner life and unconscious dimensions of the dreamer. If these hidden dimensions go undiscovered or repressed, they create trouble in our waking life, manifesting as various symptoms that point to an imbalance in one's life. They communicate very specific information about what our conscious outlooks on life are

missing. They are messages crossing the chasm of the known and the unknown⁴⁷.

Being able to listen, heed these messages, and work in the field of possibilities:

the human consciousness has to be receptive to the dao, or, to be more precise, it has to become part of the dao. The mind has to become, through embodied participation, a microcosm of the dao-field . . . Two questions arise in this context: How do we get in touch with the dao-field in the first place? And, how do we work with it? (Cohen & Bai, 2007, p. 7)

Becoming attuned to and aligned with the dao-field requires a sensitivity to *qi/ki*, the force and medium through which the field changes. *Ki* can be thought of here as the total force field emanating from a person, a field that is directly affected by the state of mind, intention and embodied awareness of the person. *Ki* is the perceived sense of the entirety of one's present moment experience and as the fields of multiple people intersect. We can easily sense this when we experience the atmosphere that permeates groups at different times—sometimes there is a tension, excitement, heat, or stagnancy.

Ki is also the means by which the *ki* of others is known. Japanese Kendo and Karate master Kenji Tokitsu (2003) writes that a combat of *ki* takes place when the fighters face each other with their weapons. Here, even before anything seems to be happening, "the *ki* of one combatant interacts with the *ki* of other, and this manifests as slight movements in their bodies and their weapons" (p. 59). The battle can be won before a strike is even made. Movements that are guided by *ki*, an awareness of entire gestalt of the interaction, are both quicker and more precise because there is no hesitation or pre-mediation. In other words, the actions of a master are guided not by

47 Our psyches are self-regulating systems that work to maintain equilibrium: "every process that goes too far immediately and inevitably calls forth a compensatory activity" (Jung, 1933, p. 17). Dreams are expressions of natural intelligence, the flux of complementary pairs of opposites that animate the universe (i.e., yin and yang in Daoist cosmology, samsara (movement) and nirvana (stillness or extinguishing) in Buddhism). Jung said that the more we try to halt or repress the processes of self-regulation in the inner world, the more we see expressions in our behaviours and relations that attempt to correct the imbalance. When the known and the unknown are not in a dialogue, the unknown becomes an enemy to be feared. All divisions of identity (inside/outside, self/other, subject/object) are the seat of this fear.

technique, but by an apprehension of the entire field of *ki* and willingness to be moved into action by this field.

The educator aligns himself or herself with the *dao*, becomes the *dao*, by developing an awareness of the field, becoming sensitive to one's own *ki* and following the *ki* in the classroom field. The educator as martial artist 'wins' in the classroom by "going with what is present . . . [and following] excitement when it arises by giving way to it and follows depression when energy falls by revealing its essence (Arnold Mindell, 1992, p. 62). The best practices, techniques and interventions an educator can employ are not initiated from some agenda outside the group, "but those that arise naturally out of the group's changing moods, tensions, emotions, roles" (Arnold Mindell, 1992, p. 61).

This active surrender is not easy as our preconceptions about who we are, who others are, and what we would like or not like to happen make it difficult to digest that which is different, changing or completely unfamiliar from our frames of reference. Recall, however what I wrote earlier about the Chinese character for *qi* (氣), which has two parts: steam (气) rising from rice as it is cooked (米). *Qi* is not simply the rising of steam but an alchemical process of cooking some thing difficult to digest into something that has refined nourishment and energy (Bai & Cohen, 2008). Staying attuned to and being inclusive of the difficult aspects of one's own inner world and outer situations begins the process of transforming them into something that has value.

Such a perspective is different than asking in what situations a particular technique or strategy will work for the educator. We can come up with possible answers to such questions by analyzing the process, actions and techniques of educators. This is important in training to become familiar with the range of possibilities for how to work with what arises in groups. However, the number of techniques and strategies are endless as, for the martial artist interested in working with *ki*, it is "necessary to touch directly upon that which gives birth to the various gestural situations" (Tokitsu, 2003, p. 63). It is the *ki* in-the-moment that guides our strategies, calculations and movements and it is to principles of working with *ki* that we must go to have a deeper understanding of authentic connection in the classroom.

Metaskills and Deep Democracy

Metaskills are described by Avraham Cohen (2009) and Amy Mindell (1995) as skills and actions that emerge with our in-the-moment, feeling-attitudes that reflect our deepest held beliefs, attitudes, and feelings. Compassion and playfulness, for example, can core feelings that arise in response to a given situation and can guide our actions and techniques. Metaskills and techniques both bring education alive, but I am coming to believe that it is metaskills that are more fundamental in that they imbue and generate the techniques educators use. The primacy of metaskills seems all the more apparent to me in the classroom because the interpersonal field, being so dynamic and non-linear, cannot be understood or transformed using techniques and strategies.

Meta-skills, which I would call the being dimension, bring vitality to our actions help us from getting stuck in a state such as confusion or holding on tightly to an pre-planned idea about how to intervene with someone in distress. At times, I can confuse the techniques and theories for working with what is emerging internally and/or between students and myself for the unfolding reality. I mistake the movement and information (sensations, feedback, perceptions) as the Dao instead of gateways into the flow of the Dao (Amy Mindell, 1995).

For the educator, the integration of heightened consciousness through embodied practice leads to the cultivation of metaskills, which have more to do with the heart of the person than any technique, can facilitate the expression of deep potential into action in a manner that mechanical uses of techniques are unable to. It is our actual implicit and explicit "feeling attitudes" about life and being human that arise in the moment that can be consciously brought to bear upon how we work with others (Amy Mindell, 1995, p. 24). It is the total dimension of our being, integrated through contemplative training and life experience, that shapes how we use techniques and tools. As we become aware of the stirrings of our heart in our craft, there is an intimate merging between our being and doing.

The development of metaskills arise from a respect for nature's unceasing ebbing and flowing and encourage or yield to what is emerging so that the potential that is

present can unfold and evolve. Resisting or constricting this flow brings about illness and chaos. Our bodies and our psyches are self-regulating systems and symptoms point the way to where attention is needed for flow to be encouraged. Tracing the arcs of my own life, I can begin to flesh out what my own metaskills are. Where in my life do I see mastery naturally wanting to manifest? How do I resist the process? How have I and how might I encourage this process? I don't want a mediocre life. I want to know the upper limits of my own potential and what exists beyond. This process is important for me, and I think potentially for others as well, because I have so often looked to the path and craft of others to compare my own development against. Learning from teachers, studying teachings and techniques, and respecting the depth of other's mastery is important, but if I am a microcosm of the dao-field, it is in the study of my own experience that I can gain mastery in life.

Understanding the path of the heart also honours the hardened resistance to the detours of life (Snowber, 2004). Actively going against the sharp edges, dwelling in stuck places, taking slow drifts sideways, the falling down and sudden leaps forward into the unexpected have much to teach. It is living in, and even amplifying the resistance to flow, where we can appreciate what it means to let go, be messy, silly, or very direct: "Only then, having fully exhausted ourselves, and having lived through many difficult situations, do some of us give up and ride the river" (Amy Mindell, 1995, p. 173). Acknowledging nature at the personal, interpersonal and global level happens through what Arnold Mindell (1992) calls *deep democracy*. Deep democracy affects all dimensions of life:

In personal life, it means openness to all of our inner voices, feelings, and movements, not just the ones we know and support, but also the ones we fear and do not know well... In group life it means the willingness to listen to and experiment with whatever part comes up. In global work, deep democracy values politics, ethnicity and the spirit of nature. (Arnold Mindell, 1992, p. 154-155)

Deep democracy for the dreambody is to attend to the gross, subtle and even seemingly random physical experiences and events of individuals and groups. Compassion and awareness afforded to conflict, illness, painful body sensations, and the subtle, 'random' sneezes, shifts in posture and facial expressions, enable us to see

the body as a being connected to a whole host of subtle, sometimes invisible, and largely immeasurable forces (Arnold Mindell, 1992, p. 19).

Dreaming with the Body

I have a dream in August 2010 that foreshadows a conference presentation experience I would have almost two years later. After describing the dream and my conference, I illustrate how various meta-skills are taken up to support my practice of embodied inner work. These skills show how to be responsive to an inner and outer experience in ways that support self-awareness, connection to others, and transformation of inner and outer conflict. My goal, in unpacking my experiences in this way, is to show that my perceptions and relationship to the unfolding of events are directly related to ways in which my own body-mind are integrated and where there is room to grow.

The Dream

I am en-route by foot to teach my first mindfulness meditation class for the fall. The entrance-way leading to the building is an off-ramp from a major highway, although there are no cars on the road. My friend Shahar is with me as I enter the building and he tells me he is impressed with my determination to run this course and follow through on my intention. As I am speaking to him, there is a memory of us in a hockey arena and I am telling him about the idea to teach a mindfulness course.

As Shahar and I enter the building, my supervisors Avi and Heesoon are there. I ask myself what I should tell people about mindfulness. 'Mindfulness is . . . something about moment-to-moment inter-experience' comes as a thought. I note the idea and continue walking further into the building.

I come to a room with lots of people. A few people are at the front of the room giving a presentation and I get impatient with them. I'm supposed to be leading a session! I feel some anger. The people finish their presentation and I bring a broken chair with me to the front as people who are taking my workshop start to assemble.

I realize I have no agenda laid out for the meeting. I write down a few notes.

1. *Check in with each person*
2. *Say who I am*
3. *What we're going to do/activities*
4. *What kind of commitment from everyone?*

People have now assembled and I look out in the room. There are about 25 people. I ask people to form a circle with their chairs. Everyone moves, and Avi, who is sitting directly across from me, points out the kind of shape we have created.

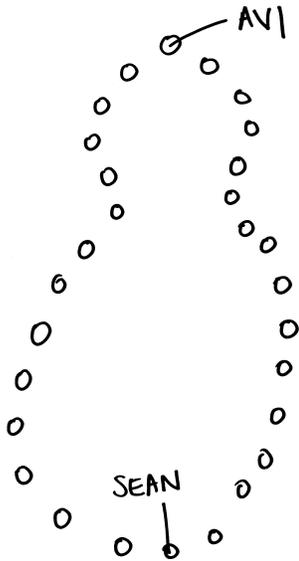


Figure 5: Dreambody

The Conference

It is April 2012. I leave the house one morning in a very grumpy, dull and unexcited mood. Feelings of unworthiness cloud the periphery of my awareness as I bicycle downtown to the American Education Research Association (AERA) conference. I am presenting with my research group and co-facilitating with one of the members, Avraham Cohen, an expert in group facilitation and one of my committee members. The doubt

about whether I am even good enough as a scholar, educator, and facilitator to live up to representing our work makes the turning of the pedals more difficult. I am not fully conscious of these thoughts and feelings until much later in the day and after reflection.

I arrive at the AERA conference. I register and get my name tag. I think that I've already paid but I'm told that I haven't paid the \$110 conference fee. As I do not have the funds in my bank account, I decline to pay and say I will be back later. Having performed for an AERA arts event two nights previous, I have my hand written name tag on an AERA card in my bag and think I will make use of this. I feel defiant. I'm not going to pay these fees for a conference I'm presenting at! My university sorely underfunds its graduate education students, and now I barely have \$100 to my name! Besides, I'm technically 'on leave' and shouldn't even be presenting at conferences.

With some time to spare before the presentation, I go up to the room where I will be presenting. I want to relax, centre, stretch and breathe without drawing attention to myself. I want to deal with the negative mood I am in. I see a door next to the presentation room that says 'Authorized Personnel Only'. I peak inside and see a long corridor with some side alcoves. I go inside.

In one of the alcoves I go through my normal routine of stretches and breathing exercises. I look up and see small video cameras and wonder if I am being watched. Two minutes later a security guard comes through the door. He asks me what I'm doing and I tell him that I'm preparing for my presentation. He seems unconvinced and asks me for my conference badge. I show him the hand written one I have and explain to him that I was part of a previous AERA event and that this was the name tag they gave me. He said that this name tag was not official and that the area I was in was off limits. He instructed me to go downstairs and get an official name tag.

I leave the area and the sight of the security guard. I feel 'surveilled' and an outsider who shouldn't be here. I run into some of the members of my group and Charles offers his name tag to me so that I now look official. In our pre-session check-in with each other, I express to my group that I am feeling fuzzy and low-energy and that I would like for my co-facilitator to help me find opportunities to take some leadership in the session.

As people start to enter the conference room, I feel a mix of anticipation, boldness, and anxious self-consciousness about how I am going to co-facilitate. I can feel the charge in my body. I feel like a child and find myself laughing nervously as our group of five arranges an astonishingly large group of 60 or 70 people into chairs in a circle two layers deep. Avraham, my co-facilitator, is at the front of the room and I sit directly across from him on the other side of the circle, in a manner similar to the image I drew from the dream. He starts the session and invites each of the group members to introduce themselves.

Avi asks me periodically if we should move on to the next part of the session we have planned. I see no reason why we shouldn't move on and say yes because we've already planned it, but I find myself becoming annoyed with these questions. I am wondering if I am performing well as a co-facilitator. I am seeing Avi as having all the power as a facilitator and I feel that I am here merely to say yes to Avi's direction. Like the image from my dream, Avi is the head of the body and I'm at the bottom of the gut!

I challenge one of Avi's suggestions, something that was discussed and agreed upon in our pre-planning session, but I seem to forget and propose an alternate plan that would take the group discussion into a different direction. Avi suggests we stay the course and I agree, with the consequent feeling that I have acquiesced again. When I speak to guide people in a short meditation and offer some perspective on the philosophy behind the group work we normally engage in with each other, I feel empowered and speak with a sense of internal authority—I feel the words coming forth spontaneously out of me and from a space of experience. I feel a sense from people in the room that I am understood and that they are keen to participate. I feel validated and valuable for a few minutes.

As part of the presentation, the five members of the group, including myself, move into a circle in the middle of the room. We ask the audience to witness us and pay attention to their experience as our small group takes 10 minutes to demonstrate how we authentically check-in with each other about our present-moment experience and animate a relational space where the field between us is capable of teaching us about ourselves and each other. We go around in our small circle and when it's my turn to

Speak about my present moment experience, I can feel the pain in my lower abdomen. The sensations are a signal to pay attention to my internal state and I notice the entirety of my body sitting on the chair. I sense the pain is related to how I've been feeling all day and the perception of myself in the group.

I feel supported by the ground and a strong sense of unique position and perspective in the group. Having been with this group intimately for some time now, I trust that my feelings matter. The vibration of the painful sensations almost propel my voice out of my body to share with Avi and the rest of the group my experience of feeling awkward as a co-facilitator, my perception that he has the power, and that I feel I am not good enough. I express that I feel concerned about how the audience sees me and what my level of competency is for the role. I am very much sitting in the broken chair from my dream. I feel calm and trusting of our group, and of Avi, that I can express myself so clearly and confidently.

Avi is very responsive to my observations and thanks me for my honest sharing. He expresses a desire to explore what wants to emerge from these observations and that he has warm feelings of friendship and connection with me. The energy that is now building in our little group container seems to now scatter as other members start a conversation about past experiences and other members that are not present. I feel disconnected from the conversation unfolding before me. I feel stuck with the energy that was just starting to flow.

Ten minutes flies by and our group session ends. We move back into the large group circle and debrief the experience with the audience. A few observations are worth noting here. A number of people speak about the tension they could see between Avi and me well before I named my experience. The power dynamic with Avi in control was apparent to some. The tension in the relational space between Avi and me was only obvious now in retrospect as it was a subtle dynamic playing out beneath the surface of the spoken content of our presentation.

Avi suggests to me openly that I actively take control of facilitating the group. For a moment I feel some hesitation and fear, but feel that some power in facilitating is what I need to experience. I jump into the driver's seat and help the group further process

their experience. Avi is in a supportive role and helps me pay attention to time and offers additional points and clarifications to help the group reflect with us. After the session finishes, I am approached by a woman who tells me that at first she had tremendous resistance to me. She experienced me at the beginning of the session as a lecturer speaking to have control over the group and not from the heart or personal experience. Her experience of me shifted, she said, when she heard me speak in the small group about feeling 'not good enough'. In this moment she could see her own internal judge and the painful burden she carried. Witnessing my admissions brought her internal judge into awareness where she was able to speak with it and have compassion for me and herself.

Move with . . . trust emergence

It was a surprise to me that my experience would become a live demonstration of how to practice contemplative inquiry as a group! I took a risk in the moment when I named my experience to Avi in front of the audience. If we had planned on using my experience ahead of time, we most certainly would not have had the depth or authenticity that occur in emergent processes. The experience reiterated again that we cannot plan such experiences nor can we hide behind our articulate theorizing if we want to address our epistemological, relational, and spiritual needs and cultivate moments of awakening. These moments have a fresh, direct, here-and-now quality to them.

Consciously and unconsciously, I brought the deepest levels of myself into the room that morning. The fears, judgements and criticisms I brought into the room found a way of showing up. So did my capacity to lead and be authentic. Even though I was not fully aware of my internal process and relationship to Avi, it was noticed at a subtle level by this audience through the subtle dynamics expressed through vocal tone, body language, and so on between us. This audience was unique in that many of the participants had personal and professional interests in holistic education and contemplation and were probably more sensitive and attuned to subtle feelings and movements in the room than most people. My dream from over a year and half ago was another signal that was inviting or preparing me to be at an edge.

I walked into the conference room believing that I wasn't an equal with Avi, a worthless graduate student, and that I should be surveilled and even punished for trying to be there. I usually feel as an equal with Avi and so these distortions, like crevices and cracks, drew attention to the disowned parts of myself that lay at the edge and beyond my concept of self. Such is the intelligence of the adaptive mechanisms of repression, denial, selective inattention, and projection. Is it not a basic human condition to want to avoid the pain of going unloved? But the term 'mechanisms' depersonalizes, objectifies and disempowers us if I fail to see my complicity in invalidating ourselves and the gifts and wounds I carry. R.D. Laing (1967) reminds me that as I become aware of how certain parts of my experience are disowned or excluded, I can then start to see how I am actively involved in avoiding ownership and responsibility over my thoughts, emotions, actions, and choices. One aim of inner work is to become both more sensitive to when these parts emerge and to take responsibility for engaging them.

Containing: Grounding, Centring and Boundaries

Trusting that bringing attention to my inner state was important to the process, I found support in "feeling both pain and possibility" in the pain in my gut (Aposhyan, 1999, p. 174). There was a sense, as Aposhyan puts it so well, that:

Even if that movement is only a tight throb, there is always movement in any sensation. By breathing and allowing the sensation to move as it wants to, it eventually sequences out, bringing us into a new position in the world.

(Aposhyan, 1999, p. 174)

Susan Aposhyan says that we are at our healing edge "when we are feeling old pain and aware of a new possibility at the same time" (Aposhyan, 1999, p. 174)⁴⁸. By only identifying with our learned emotional responses, we keep inflicting pain upon ourselves.

48 This potential for the energy of the pain to sequence through body, as it occurred for me from the abdomen and chest and out the face and hands in speaking the truth, brings the past and future together in the present moment.

If we only look to ideas and fantasies about the future without honouring the energy in the body, we can disassociate from our bodies⁴⁹.

Body awareness is critical to honouring my body's energy because it offers the potential to; curiously observe and examine it; either name the experience internally or express it to others; reflect on it; and consciously choose how to relate to it (Brantbjerg, 2007). However, awareness alone is not enough. I need a means of containing the energy of the pain so that I can both stay in touch with overwhelming or distressing emotions in the body and not be overcome by them. Containment is my capacity to be conscious of, hold and let go of emotional charge in the body, particularly in my musculature. Brantbjerg (2004) suggests that establishing containment involves developing at least three 'tools;' centring or sensing the core; grounding or sensing a connection to the ground; and boundaries or sensing a difference between self and world (p. 231).

Centring involves active capacity to initiate movement from the lower abdominal region, which roughly corresponds to the area around our centre of gravity. This area of centre, referred to as the dantien⁵⁰ in Chinese and hara in Japanese is considered

49 This issue is what Robert Augustus Masters (2012) speaks of as a connected catharsis where we are not just having an emotional outpouring for the sake of having some kind of release, but as a surrender to and expression of the suffering at the core of our Being. Disconnected catharsis is "the releasing of the energy of disconnected pain, pain marooned from its originating factors" (n.p.). Feeling anger by working ourselves up to feel it is disconnected; feeling anger because a personal boundary was violated by another person is connected. By being sensitive to the emotion, sensations and deepest sense of who we are, our expression can be integrated and authentic. Masters describes this authentic expression as: "more of a surrender than a doing...a dynamic yielding [that] is not the stance of a victim, but rather that of an explorer, a seeker of the depths, wherein are "stored" more than just our old wounds. When the waves, the sometimes enormous waves, of rising feeling come, they are not fought or fled, but instead are allowed, at the right time, to "take over," with no concern for their destination. In trusting this process... we not only ride the waves, but become them. Their power becomes ours, not to have, but to be." This kind of surrender and yielding is not an intellectual experience, but is existential and embodied. Riding the waves and becoming them, rather than being overwhelmed by them is supported by what is referred to in the body-mind psychotherapy literature as containment.

50 *Dantien* (丹田) translates roughly as "elixir field" or "energy center" and is central to meditation, exercise and medical practices in Daoist, Buddhist and Indian traditions. Chinese medicine and Daoist martial arts typically speak of the three main dantiens: lower (the region below the navel), middle (diaphragm and chest area around the heart); and upper (shoulders, neck and head). Dantien is used to typically refer to the lower dantien and is quite similar to hara, the Japanese term for "belly". The lower dantien "is considered to be the foundation of rooted standing, breathing, and body awareness in qigong and martial arts [...] [and] in Chinese, Korean, and

through the martial traditions that train this area to be a source of power. Strictly speaking, my centre is not about a particular point in my body. Aikido master Richard Strozzi-Heckler notes that "If center is the place we operate from, then the entire living body is center" (Strozzi-Heckler, 1997, p. 79). To centre, from this perspective "is to experience our body in a total way" (ibid, p. 79). Centre in these terms, is a way of describing my core self and individuality, my unique centre in the universe. In psychological terms, it is key to healthy differentiation from others. Centering was critical to seeing myself as being both different than Avi and being able to resist the societal norms that tend to discourage showing vulnerability or confrontation. The centre was also the inner distress that needed my attention, and by offering it as a front and centre concern for the group, I was brought into a different position with it. Rather than marginalizing it, I allowed it to become the heart of what wanted to be expressed.

Grounding involves the sense of our weight upon the ground. For some people, Brantjberg (2004) notes, such an experience is difficult to connect with because fear and anxiety arise from not trusting that we will actually be held by the ground; we lift ourselves away from the ground, can't stand still, or are reluctant to stand at all (p. 234). Grounding gave me the basic ability to stay connected to my centre under shifting circumstances. I can connect to the quality of grounding by surrendering the weight of my being to gravity. This does not mean collapsing, but trusting that I can be supported by the ground and not use more energy than I need to in order to maintain balance. I felt the weight of my body on the chair and my feet on the ground as I became aware of and spoke about my experience.

Boundaries are about our sense of personal space, what is 'me' and 'not-me' or 'us' and 'them'. They emerge initially in the course of healthy development through the differentiation between the child and the mother. In the body, various sensations are felt when boundaries are respected or violated. For example, a strong "heartbeat, sweaty palms, held breath, an impulse to push with my arms, or similar sensations tell me that another person is too close to me at that moment, that my personal space is being

Japanese traditions, it is considered the physical center of gravity of the human body and is the seat of one's internal energy (qi). A master of calligraphy, swordsmanship, tea ceremony, martial arts, among other arts, is held in the Japanese tradition to be "acting from the hara." (Wikipedia, 2012)

pressured or invaded" (Brantbjerg, 2004, p. 238). My ability to protect my centre and claim my personal space is connected to the body impulses to say no, to move towards what I want, and to move away from what I don't want. In the session, I felt my own personal space as a facilitator was somehow restricted by my negative self-perceptions, being surveilled and being with a facilitator who is older and has much more experience than I do. The pain in my gut was very much about my own personal power in the group and the need to have more room.

Dance with Timespirits

My identity is complex and multi-dimensional. There are innumerable possibilities for how I might experience and express myself in any given moment. These possibilities are shaped by certain enduring structures called archetypes that have been shown to exist across cultures. Carl Jung was most famous for commenting on how we come to experience universal character structures⁵¹ that represent basic human desires, needs, motivations and aspirations. Other related ideas are 'masks' or 'sub-personalities'. Arnold Mindell (1992) uses the term 'timespirit' to describe the "temporal and transitory" nature of identities, roles and archetypes with individuals and in groups:

Timespirits are like figures in our dreams. They are like whirlpools or vortices in an otherwise invisible field; they attract you, suck you into their swirl of energies. When you identify with a timespirit in a given field, you actually experience the emotions of that spirit; your consciousness is altered so to speak. You get angry or become inflated. You feel heroic or victimized. The timespirit's energies make you moody and possessed, crazy and joyous, depressed and suicidal. (p. 25)

There are many roles and identities I can take up; some I am strongly attached to whereas I avoid others. A short list...

orphan / servant / asshole / seeker / tyrant / caregiver / mr. know-it-all / fool / warrior / lover / hero / peacemaker / virgin / macho / sage / rebel / magician / creator-artist

⁵¹ Jung said that the archetypes represent "the accumulated experiences of organic life in general, a million times repeated and condensed." (Jung, 1971, p. 400)

All of these archetypes play an important role on the path of transformation as they represent different ways of being aligned and responsive to what emerges in the moment and has potential for growth. During the AERA session, I was inhabited by a number of timespirits. Identifying with being broke and under surveillance by security and cameras before the session started had me swirling in the energy of a rebel. As the session unfolded and feelings of inferiority emerged, I felt anxious and sought approval from Avi and the group (the orphan). Wanting to address my distress, I became a caregiver for self and a warrior by standing up for myself and telling Avi about my feelings. I was a rebel for a moment as I went against cultural norms that tend to keep us from discussing negative feelings and being in conflict. Avi's interest and empathy for me brought up feelings of love (the lover) and led to conversation about how I would like to be in the group (creator) and to taking on a position of power with a plan (ruler) in which I felt a sense of clarity and groundedness about the process (sage). One of the women attending the session also experienced different timespirits. At first she resisted me and perhaps had feelings of wanting to hurt me or make me leave (rebel). When I named my internal process to the group, she became aware of her own pain around judging herself and feeling inferior. This led to compassion for me and for herself (lover).

One significant observation here is how I was able to work with some of the potentially explosive energy that was contained in the heartbox from dream in the opening chapter. I did not reactively explode in anger towards Avi, but the pent up energy was still processed. My own grounded containment and the safety and trust inside our relationship provided a pathway or channel for a disowned part of myself to come to life. My growth experience is not an isolated one and I am moved deeply by seeing the woman who was witnessing the process was part of it. Although my wounding is my own, processing it shifted the relationship she had to me and created an opportunity to attend to her own wounding.

Systematic Thinking

What emerged in the session was not random or mystical. Our group has spent a number of years learning how our inner worlds meet in a shared inter-subjective space and we reflect upon and study our group's process. There is a science to facilitating groups that attend to restoring connection to the human heart. There are direct parallels in this regard to neigong and internal martial arts training.

We have a clear beginning of the conference session that invites people to arrive and be oriented to a map of what we are here to explore and what we will not be able to achieve in the short period of time we have to work together. We remind ourselves that we are creating spaces for awakening to occur, that such awakening cannot be forced, and that groups capable of supporting this work take time to evolve. The most significant part of the opening is the inner orientation where each person gets a chance to do through a short meditation and check-in. Acknowledging and accepting how we are showing up in the moment prepares us to be receptive for the learning to transpire later and helps create a safe group environment.

Our group sessions, either alone or with conference participants, are always oriented to learning from how the field-space of the group can reveal more about our own and each other's nature. This learning is not intellectually driven but about following the subtle (hidden ki), noticing where there is imbalance in the group dynamics, or attending to the states of flow and resistance that people are feeling. Aligning one's attention to the entirety of the group and one's experience on a moment-to-moment basis starts to reveal certain patterns and processes about how individual experiences are deeply interconnected within and beyond the group.

In bringing attention to and including the various dimensions that shape personal and interpersonal dynamics, either silently in ourselves or by naming them to the group, the field starts to reveal itself and balance itself. The work, however, is in learning how to skillfully bring our own attention or others' to experiences and issues that are edgy or prohibited. Issues of trust, safety, a sense of purpose, power dynamics, cultural norms, the capabilities of each person, and personal history amongst others become areas where the group learns about limits and opportunities for aligning mind, body, heart and dao-field. Some time is spent attending to and articulating how these forces play out in

the group in the here-and-now, rather than merely abstract processes. The science lies in discovering and discerning precisely how our subjective experience is not random or disconnected from what's around us, but is deeply interrelated. We end our groups with a closing check-in and meditation to help everyone integrate their experience over the session.

In the training sessions with Lou, we often begin with tea and gentle movements to warm up the body. We remind ourselves to breath deeply and prepare our senses for discovery. The intention set at this time is one of integrating our mind and bodies to an extraordinary degree, rather than simply going through the motions. As we start to move, we start to ask questions about what is happening in the body and mind, particularly where there are blind spots. The narrative I shared in the chapter on training about learning how to go underneath the cup with the body demonstrates that the internal martial artist requires a nimble thinking mind to understand how the whole body can be moved in a co-ordinated and balanced manner. To re-pattern our bodyminds to move in different ways, we need time to think about our movements as we move. Breaking our movements down to their constituent parts and asking what is happening begins to reveal that how we move is a reflection of how we think. One role of systematic training and specific psychophysical practices is to imbue a different way of thinking about movement, perception, and action. What one means by 'letting go' or 'moving the whole body,' for example, starts to take on a sharper clarity as there is a systematic investigation of the experience of engaging and relaxing specific muscles in the body.

Feed My Demons

Sometime after the session, I took up a kind of inner push-hands to work with a recurring fear of not being in control using a western adaptation of a Tibetan practice called *chöd* (see Allione, 2008)⁵². Tsultrin Allione developed a practice of 'feeding your

52 In her practice of 'feeding your demons' Allione is not teaching the original Chöd, but a practice adapted for modern life and the average person. Chöd, in its present day practice, comes out of the intersection of Indian Tantra and Tibetan Buddhism. Chöd has a "Mother" and

demons' based on the principles of *chöd*, which is translated from Tibetan and means 'to sever.' *Chöd* is represented by a ritual knife (*kartika*) as a symbol of cutting through the ego and the illusion of an enduring, independent self. I feel the resonance with my heartbox/knife dream. In the adapted practice of *feeding your demons*, anything we might fear or drags us down (such as addictions, anger and debilitating beliefs) is felt in the body, personified, and dialogued with. In this dialogue, the practitioner discerns what the fear or demon needs to feel satisfied and the practitioner, through very clear steps, nurtures the demon with what it requires. Allione (2008) writes that demons are manifestations of our fears and that our desires, which are the other complementary side of our fears, manifest as 'gods.' By going into dialogue with our god-demons, we move from denying, splitting, or running from that which disturbs us into nourishing it with what it most deeply needs, rather than what it wants. We become integrated with what is seen as outside of ourselves. She writes:

When we try to fight against or repress the disowned parts of ourselves that I call demons, they actually gain power and develop resistance. In feeding our demons we are not only rendering them harmless; we are also, by addressing them instead of running away from them, nurturing the shadow parts of ourselves, so that the energy caught in the struggle transforms it into a positive protective force (Allione, 2008, pp. 6-7).

The story mentioned earlier about the intoxicated man on the train represents a situation where he was outwardly angry and probably wanting to get into a fight, but underneath he really needed to be loved, seen, and held. Once this need was recognized by the old man sitting down nearby, the drunken man's energy shifted towards a deeper hurt being witnessed. The process of feeding your demons is an internalization of this kind of witnessing process. The following is an integration of the practice guidelines developed by Allione (2008) and my experience:

I am in the foyer of the Vancouver Aquatic Center and find a corner where I set up two chairs facing each other. To prepare, I breath deeply and invite ease of the body,

"Father" lineage and Machig Labdron is considered the founder of the Mother lineage from which Allione's understanding of the practice of *Chöd* originates (Wikipedia, 2013)

emotions, and mind. I close my eyes for the duration of the meditation. I set an intention for the practice to benefit myself and all other beings. I feel on edge and scared about something that I cannot describe or identify. The area around my chest feels compressed and I have difficulty feeling the sense of myself being on the ground. I focus intently on these sensations. In the first step of the practice, I decide upon the challenging perception (demon—i.e., a fear, god—i.e., a desire) that I want to work with. The sensations evoke a sense that there is something wrong with me and that I am not in control of my inner power. There is an associated desire to please and acquiesce to a woman that I am attracted to and who may have some attraction towards me. I personify these sensations and feelings into a being. I see a tall woman with a voluptuous body, strong thighs that could crush me, large breasts almost popping out of a tight, leather corset for me to drown in and big black leather boots that could squash me. She has the eyes of a cat, small fangs, a snake tongue, and her moist, glistening skin morphs between light green and beige. I ask her what she wants from me, what she needs from, and how she will feel when she gets what she needs.

I move quickly to the other seat in front me and spend some time becoming the entity. I imagine myself having all the qualities I described above and see my normal self as small and hunched over like a small boy. As the entity, I answer the three questions. “I want to suck all your manly power from you and reduce you to an impotent pulp. I want to make you submit to my will and for you to see how powerless you really are. What I really need is to know that I can let my guard down and to be open, soft, vulnerable, and dependent. I will feel a deep sense of ease, surrender, and peacefulness if this need is met.” I go back to my original seat and imagine the demon-god in front of me.

I imagine my body dissolving into a liquid or “nectar” of the feeling of ease, surrender and peacefulness that the demon-god would feel if its need was satisfied. I can feel a charge throughout my body and sense that it’s vibrational intensity and density increases—I feel thicker. I then feed the entity, allowing her to voraciously drink the liquid. My body trembles and I feel like I am being pulled through a very small hole in front of me. She becomes exhausted from drinking and appears satisfied and then disappears.

In the wake of the entity disappearing, my wife Stephanie appears. I ask her if she is my ally. She says no and disappears. A young white man with short blond hair and a strong chest appears. He says he is not my ally either and turns into a middle-aged native man. He has a small moustache, round face, round tummy and swimming trunks. He is very calm. He is standing next to the swimming pool and says that he is my ally. I ask him how he will help me, how he will protect me, what his commitment is to me and how I can gain access to him. I switch places once again, become the ally, and answer these questions: "Remember your primordial confidence. You are born from the earth and are already home. Draw strength in from around you".

I return to the other seat and have a feeling of being a magnet and drawing in everything around me towards my centre. I imagine the ally dissolving into me and then, as the last step, I dissolve into emptiness by resting without trying to make anything happen.

At the beginning of this dissertation I introduced my dream about the bomb and the fear I had about not being in control of the knife and causing everything to blow up. The fear surfaced in the conference presentation and an opportunity arises to name it and shift my relationship to it. There is still more yet to be discovered about the fear and the exercise of feeding my demons reveals, from one perspective, that I fear a loss of my manhood. This fear becomes personified in the experience as a character impeccably designed to take this away. However, the further unfolding of the process reveals that the way forward is not reclaiming my masculinity, but being open, soft and vulnerable enough to connect to my primordial confidence. The image of the native man with the round face and tummy evokes a sense of yielding to the ground of my being, the eternal Dao. The Dao gives rise to yin and yang, masculine and feminine, and it is in returning to this source that I will find true power.

Occasionally, the internal experience of surrendering my body to the demon is very intense and is the only reference point I have for what death might be like. In a way, something does die, perhaps my identification with a particular kind of self. The relationship between *budo*, martial arts as Way, and the internal work of *feeding your demons* becomes more evident here. Morehi Ueshiba, the founder of the martial art of Aikido ('the Way of unifying with life energy') said that the primary goal of the martial

artist is to achieve mind-body unity, not to defeat the opponent, but to join with them so that the *heart* of all involved may be transformed (Ueshiba, 1988). To transform the heart we need to see how the attacker (that which we resist) and the lover (that which we desire, want) are not "out there" but within (W. Palmer, 1994, p. 6). *Budo* prepares us to meet and join with the lover and attacker within so that they may be transformed into a greater whole. Through the rigorous inner training, "the mind can become calm and steady across a range of conscious states and be sharpened like a sword to cut through delusions and distorted perceptions" (Bai, Park & Cohen, forthcoming), rather than cutting through the person upon which these distortions are projected! The educator can take up these kinds of practices as a way of working alone on conflicts and difficulties that manifest in groups situations. Embodied inner work is responsive to adversarial external experiences as these situations and the internal reactions are viewed as friends pointing the way towards our existential core.

Engage the Hidden Ki

Not only do I use personal defenses to estrange myself from my experience, I also use what R.D. Laing called interpersonal defences, which are used to "act destructively on the experience of others through collusion, injunctions, and attributions, and processes of invalidation, mystification and so on" (Burston & Frie, 2006, p. 223). These defences are distortions in the social field and "prescribe and proscribe certain kinds of thoughts, feelings or experiences as invalid and estrange us from ourselves and each other" (p. 223). I mystified Avi as the high priest and at one point tried to invalidate him by engaging in a subtle power play over the agenda.

In becoming aware of my distortions of Avi and naming them, I opened an opportunity for Avi and me to compassionately connect. He took a genuine curiosity and open-heartedness towards me during a vulnerable moment. Instead of defending himself or attacking me, he took my side for a moment to help me get at what was causing the distress. In many martial arts traditions, the teacher helps the student to win the battle so that the attacker can learn about the strengths and weaknesses of his attack. Arnold Mindell (1992) suggests, likewise, that by asking group members to take the side of attacker, we can understand what his or her motivation is, and in returning back to our own sides, show him what our experience is of his attack and how it makes

us feel. The potential exists here for all parties to take different perspectives, work with conflict and even strengthen their own attack! This is precisely what Avi did as he opened up the space for me to take some direction with facilitating the group.

The royal road to transformation in this moment came about through attending to the subtle, hidden ki of the situation. I was confronting Avi, but underneath I was longing to be recognized and valued. This longing was the hidden ki that needed to be worked with as it is "the ki that is hidden and not revealed presents the opportunity for victory" (Ueshiba, 1988, p. 23). Winning depends on how well the educator and the group attend to the hidden ki⁵³. I remember a story retold by Amy Mindell (1995, p.104) about an American *aikido* master who was riding in a train in Japan:

An aikido master from the United States went to Japan to refresh his skills. He got onto one of the subways in Japan and suddenly a big brute came hobbling down the aisle, drunk and threatening to everyone. The aikido master was thrilled that he could finally put his skills into action, since he had never had the opportunity outside of his traditional practice. As the brute and the aikido master were about to fight, a small, elderly man sitting on the bench looked up and asked the drunken man if he would come over and talk. The drunk threatened the old man, but was nevertheless intrigued. The elderly man asked him what it was that he had been drinking. The drunk replied, "Sake!" The old man smiled with delight, saying that he, too, loved to drink sake outdoors with his wife in the evening. The old man asked the drunk if he had a wife, and the drunken man said that he was alone and very sad. When the aikido master from the U.S. was about to leave the subway, he turned around and saw the drunken man lying with his head on the old man's lap, talking quietly as the old man stroked his head.

I can practice feeling into the hidden ki by asking 'what is absent, omitted and unspoken?' Topics that are never spoken of and actions that are never done to or initiated by certain members are hidden parts of the group process. These hidden parts, not being allowed to surface, create an internal conflict and give rise to responses on the

53 For example, Mindell (1992, p. 63) suggests that we "notice when your opponent is belligerent and also correct, and compliment the correctness."

surface that gets a response from others. By attending to the hidden ki, perhaps by naming what I sense to the other without judgment, there is room for the conflict to be resolved on its own because the underlying feeling is validated. This "doing non-doing" is reflected in the Daoist understanding of *wuwei* in which "real power manifests itself without the strain of having to act but rather coincides with the natural unfolding of things" (Rossi, 1997, p. 5).

Play: Sean in the Park

Sometimes naming or asking about what lies under the surface is not appropriate. I occasionally have an internal struggle with people who have a very different view of the world, aren't following along with myself or others, and are otherwise resistant to how things 'should be'. Consider the following vignette:



Figure 6: Crow

A friend and I come into distant view of an old woman feeding bread to ravens in a park. My friend becomes tense and stares at her with blazing eyes. He tells me he's angry and wants to do something, but he is trapped inside his anger. In response to my friend's strong emotions my breathing and my body become activated and tense. I am anxious about a possible conflict unfolding. I move to sensing the weight of my body upon the ground. Suddenly, I find myself walking towards her and call out in an Italian accent: "Hey, you got any bread for me? I'm hungry too"! The woman smiles and comes my way, telling me that she has no

use for the white bread because it upsets her stomach. She speaks out of concern for her health and with care for the birds. I reflect back to her that white bread is not very healthy for humans or birds and that the birds would be better off with nuts and seeds. Still in the distance, my friend is now calming down and joins us in a lively dialogue about birds and ecology. Shortly after the woman leaves, we see her telling others in the park about what she has just learned about bread and birds.

This encounter rouses my interest because of the playful attitude and feeling that arose in me in the moment. Being aware of the situation with my friend, my own experience, and an emerging desire to connect in an absurd way all supported finding some sense of flow with everything in the situation. The crows, likely well fed without the bread, did indeed bring me out of my shell and into playful connection with this woman⁵⁴.

Improvised playfulness⁵⁵ is important for educators because:

sometimes teacher and student know . . . [the] . . . pedagogical dance by heart, finding comfort and safety in its predictable order. Then the pedagogical process degenerates into mere routine. Too much comfort and safety and predictability are anaesthetizing: You cannot sleepwalk through the pedagogical experience. The

⁵⁴The common raven is considered one of the most playful birds, even playing games with wolves and dogs and making toys out of twigs to play with each other. Some Pacific Northwest indigenous cultures see Raven as a creator and trickster god. On the other side of town where this encounter happened, there is a sculpture at the UBC Museum of Anthropology by Bill Reid called *The Raven and The First Men*. The sculpture shows a scene from a Haida myth. In the myth, a bored and well-fed raven, discovers and helps free some frightened and timid men trapped in a clam. The raven tires of the men and intends to put them back in the clam shell, but then decides to find some females for the men by freeing female humans trapped in inside.

⁵⁵ Paediatrician, psychiatrist and sociologist Donald Winnicott writes about play as being in the in-between and it's important to human development. Play is "immensely exciting" because it "is always the precarious interplay of personal psychic reality and the experience of control of actual objects" (Winnicott, 1989, p. 47 in Zarrilli, 2009, p. 99). Play originates in the dialectic space between mother and child. He saw that the "child's ability to feel the body as the place where the psyche lives could not have been developed without a consistent technique of handling" (Wikipedia, 2013). The ways in which the mother holds, handles, baths, and feeds her child creates (or fails to create) a "holding environment" that allows the child to feel safe, supported and develop in healthy ways. It is in the "moments of transition" (Winnicott, 1989, p. 64) in movement where a deep attentiveness is required to continuously communicate a sense of support and grounding.

pedagogical dance is a wild and chaotic process, a struggle that is sometimes joyful, sometimes painful. (Pryer, 2001, p. 137)

The moment with my friend and the woman was “a space-moment of life being, becoming; ... a space-moment of risk” (Fels, 1998, p. 5), a performative “stop” moment that “tugged on my sleeve” (Fels, 1998, p. 5) and invited us all into “*an ongoing bringing forth of a world* through the process of living itself” (Maturana & Varela, as cited in Fels, 1998, p. 6, italics in original). It is the cultivation of this experimental way of being in relationship that creates an ‘empty space’ (Brook, 1968) for memory, anticipation and possibility and for the “rational or irrational, enlightening or absurd, relevant or irrelevant” (Keeney, 2009, p. 21) to give rise to the bring forth of a world.

Chapter 7: Inner Work and Education

I opened with a personal dream and began to unpack and work with the images and questions prompted by my reflection. Making sense of the dream involved looking within and then beyond myself to see how the threads of my culture, my society, and my past have woven me. I worked with some of these threads and put some of the meanings from my dream into action. Through *neigong* and a number of encounters that invited me to act upon a deeply felt sense of who I was I started learning how to use the knife to pick through the tattered threads and reweave them—a metaphor for doing embodied inner work. I realized in the process that this work was possible by certain kinds of relationships; relationships characterized by a curious experimental attitude, free of shaming judgments and evaluations, strong intentions towards growth and healing, and an appreciation that other forces beyond what our conceptual mind can grasp are at play. I spoke briefly to these attitudes as meta-skills and what they look like in practice. In a way, I completed the last step of the dream process, which was to engage in some kind of ritual or action that concretizes the meaning of the dream in physical experience. Some of these actions and experiences, I am sure, have surfaced questions for anyone reading this about their own inner world, their own practice as educators, and the implications for education. However, it is here in this closing chapter that I want to speak more explicitly to how my personal inner work applies to more general questions and concerns in education.

Metaphoric Sensibilities

From the conversations I've had with other artists, educators, and therapists I can see that we are starting to wake up from the collective nightmare of instrumentalism, Cartesian dualism and technology. The metaphor of the technology and the machine, controlled by the strong willed, rational mind, is starting to break down as the consequences to human, social and planetary health are starting to show. Metaphors are perspectives and ways of seeing and when we live within them we can be betrayed by them, a point Romanyshyn (2012) makes in reflecting on how the roots of the western cultural historical metaphors of technology and rational control run deep and are "being lived out unconsciously and has functioned as a symptom and collective dream" (p. 107).

The image of the knife represented a personal way of starting to cut through through some of the rotting root metaphors and assumptions that I carry within me. I cannot and we cannot, however, simply decide to throw away the metaphor and take up a new one. Like garbage, we can throw something away, but it then begins to fester in the margins until we notice it and learn to recycle it somehow into something different. What is this something different? What are the images and symbols that can orient my students and my own efforts towards more collaborative movement of growth, integration, healing and awakening? How does control and instrumentalism still fit in this picture, yet be guided by a more grounded, body-mind-heart centred ethics? I ask about images and symbols because in making the translation from my own experience and transformation to more collective action, I do not want to fall in the trap of prescribing more actions, goals, and objectives. There must be room for the hidden, unconscious and mysterious at a collective level as we envision what our world, institutions, and ways of living will look like.

It is with a metaphoric sensibility (Romanyshyn, 2012) that I believe this envisioning requires. Metaphor, Romanyshyn argues, is crucial to making space for the unconscious because it undoes our fixed, linear understandings of who we think we are and presents images of who we might be. The 'alchemy of metaphor' is in the space between the 'is' and 'is not':

On the side of the metaphoric 'is' a metaphor seems to adhere to the logic of $A = A$, the logic of identity. A thing is what it is. A person is who he is and about this 'what' or 'who' there hovers no ambiguity. The identity pole of a metaphor affirms that things and people have selfidentity. On the other side of this tension, however, the metaphoric 'is not' undoes these adhesions. It erases the = sign; it dissolves the self-identity of the thing and the person. The 'is not' pole of metaphor makes a big difference. Hidden, as it were, in the shadow of the 'is' of metaphor, the 'is not' of metaphor does its work of opening the imagination. (Romanyshyn, 2012, p. 106)

The logic of metaphor is quite different from the logic of fact, meaning, and mind because it invites "provisional ways of knowing" (p. 104) that make room for the imagination, the unconscious, the unknowable, and mystery. Metaphor "begins the work

of transforming education from being a matter of transmitting information and/or imposing values to education as an awakening of the curious and creative imagination” (p. 104). How can the educator work with the alchemy of metaphor where meanings are both fixed and disrupted?

Images of Empty Space and Yin-Yang

I think some of the metaphors and images that can help us collectively re-envision our philosophies and practices as educators emerged through my research. The circular image of the ‘body that is all eyes’ that came to me during the research suggests that our bodyminds, our ways of seeing, and the ways we hold each other in relationship need to be emptied if we are to be filled with new knowledge and our true nature. This image suggests that classrooms and relationships that facilitate awakening are *mandalas*. A mandala, Sanskrit for circle, symbolizes the universe in Tibetan Buddhist and Hindu spiritual practice and is used as an aid to meditation (Brauen, 1997). The meditator contemplates the image until he or she has totally internalized every detail of the mandala. Through internalizing the entire image the meditator accesses deep layers of the unconscious and may experience a sense of unity between him or her self and the universe, a return to an original state, and an opening to new creative possibilities (Fontana, 1999)⁵⁶. When the curriculum becomes a mandala-making process, our entire being is invited into whatever we are contemplating and transforms us in the process. We bring living pedagogy to life. The value of inner work for education, then, is in the way it creates containment fields that allow for maximum ontological security—that is, the inner world and the classroom are mandalas where even the subtlest parts are included and meditated upon.

The mandala is made concrete in the image of a *dojo*, a place where training in the Way is the sacred work. The dojo can be anywhere; in a relationship, on the bus, in the park, with a piece of writing, in a classroom and in a martial arts centre. What makes the dojo special is that it has ‘walls’, limits and constraints that create the empty space in which the work is to take place. We can construct the walls, but it is in the emptiness

⁵⁶ Jung and von Franz in *Man and His Symbols* (1964) wrote about how mandalas appear during periods of profound internal shifts and growth towards a more integrated personality.

that our dreams, memories, conflicts, aspirations and celebrations move and mingle. Chapter 11 of the *Dao De Jing* (Lao-Tzu, 1988) offers some valuable wisdom here:

*We join spokes together in a wheel,
but it is the center hole
that makes the wagon move.*

*We shape clay into a pot,
but it is the emptiness inside
that holds whatever we want.*

*We hammer wood for a house,
but it is the inner space
that makes it livable.*

*We work with being,
but non-being is what we use.*

The painter's open canvas, the stillness of *zazen* meditation, or the mindful movements of taijiquan puts the practitioner in touch with the empty space or dao-field that animates life because it pays attention to how the structures, walls and forms of our lives facilitate or hinder the flow of energy in the action of drawing, moving, thinking and feeling. The same is true of the classroom and if the space is cluttered by fixed attachments to certain ideas and identities or the walls not well constructed, the vital energy or *qi* that drives living inquiry will get stuck in a corner or leak through a crack in the wall. Cohen and Bai (2007) recount a story from the Zen tradition that teaches about the value of emptying ourselves in order to be receptive to vitality:

A cup of Tea

NAN-IN a Japanese master during the Meiji era (1868-1912), received a university professor who came to inquire about Zen.

Nan-in served tea. He poured his visitor's cup full, and then kept on pouring.

The professor watched the overflow until he no longer could restrain himself. “It is overfull. No more will go in!”

“Like this cup,” Nan-in said, “you are full of your own opinions and speculations. How can I show you Zen unless you first empty your cup?” (Senzaki & Reps, 1957, p. 19 in Cohen & Bai, 2007, para)

We need the structure of the cup to hold ideas, but if we are full to the brim with preconceived ideas, how are we to be in a state that is receptive to Zen, to *what is*—not what we think is? Cohen and Bai (2007) do not suggest that we not offer students materials to fill the mind with, but that we appreciate our minds as teacups that can be filled and drunk from, not just filled.

Working with Yin and Yang

I see here the resonance of filling and emptying with the Daoist philosophy of yin and yang.

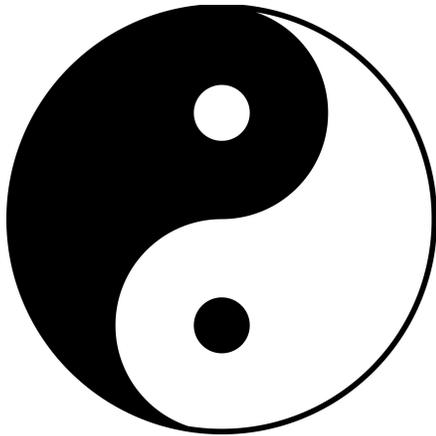


Figure 7: Yin-Yang

The Daoist view of the cosmos is that the one (the Dao) gives rise to the two (yin and yang), the complementary opposites that give rise to each other and propel phenomenal life (Wong, 1992). Yin is often characterized as receptive, still, soft, wet, slow, diffuse and yielding. The earth, the feminine and the dark of night are associated with the energy of yin. Yang has complimentary characteristics: hard, aggressive, fast,

and masculine. It is associated with the sky and the light of day. In the practice of taijiquan, the yin-yang is reflected in the harmonious opening and closing of the joints, the rise and fall of the breath, and the soft, relaxed movements that give rise to explosive energy. The spontaneous, dynamic circulation between such is enabled by a bodymind that moves freely in empty spaces.

In the classroom, the Daoist educator is practicing how to align these two forces. At times there is a need for firm boundaries, instructions and enforcing the rules of engagement. We start and end on time in a set place. We give other people space to speak without interrupting them. The educator is empowered to guide his or her students in a process of inquiry. Assignments are due on a specific date with explicit expectations and evaluation criteria. Inquiry is guided by compelling ideas and questions and we engage in readings and the acquisition of knowledge. There are consequences for not following the rules. These kinds of actions grant a degree of psychological security and containment for inquiry, but are not givens. In my earliest days of teaching I was afraid to exert yang energy for fear that students would not like the way I governed the classroom space. I learned very quickly that how most of my students looked to me for leadership and direction, and in resisting this they felt unsafe in the classroom. Many hours were spent trying to allay their anxieties about what the expectations were.

In a group conference presentation I was part of more recently, I learned how the failure of our group to set boundaries and expectations with the participants derailed our presentation. A woman came late to the presentation and aggressively insisted that we address her questions after we said that there will be time later and that we have certain things we want to accomplish in the session. One of our group members broke from our plan and tried to answer the woman's questions while another member tried to regain control of the process by confronting her behaviour in front of everyone. Many people found it distressing that this woman's behaviour was confronted and one participant spoke of how he felt his masculine side was being repressed by an implicit cultural privileging in classrooms of letting everyone speak and not shutting anyone down. Our presentation took a very different direction than intended and was a good learning experience as the discussion focused on our fears of confrontation. However, we failed as a group to create a container that allowed us to offer what we had come to share.

The yin dimension is about listening allowing, emerging, and moving with what is. At first, it is perhaps slightly more important than the yang because it is through listening and being still first that our firm actions can be sensitive to what is present. At a high level of mastery, the space between listening and acting blurs. In the classroom, the yin is about slowing down, feeling into what is present in the bodymind, temporarily suspending judgment and will, and patiently waiting. Questions are held and allowed to work away on us rather than aggressively pursued for quick, neat answers. In many of my classrooms, the yin is attended by practicing 'checking-in', something I do at the beginning and end of my classes. My classrooms, which range from 20-35 students, mostly happen in a circle. After a short period of silence for students to focus on what is happening in their inner world, I ask students to go around and use a few words to describe their experience in the moment (we do the same thing at the end to close the class session). I instruct them on how to do this by showing how I do it. This usually takes less than five minutes and is a very good way of gauging what students are preoccupied by. If I sense that the energy in the room is tired, I will acknowledge the fatigue and invite everyone to rest with it rather than try to overcome it. Quite often, students feel energized simply by accepting their state! Other times we might go in small groups outside for a walking conversation with the result that students are able to get some ideas and questions moving with their bodies. Naming their experience helps them to become aware of their inner world and have some healthy detachment with it as a state of experience that can change. The act of voicing it creates an opportunity to examine their relationship to the state. The check-in is also part of creating a container for deep democracy in the classroom. Students hear the wide range of states present in the room and learn to appreciate the presence of diverse states of consciousness in themselves and others. It is also an opportunity for me to share how I am doing in the moment, my perceptions and feelings about the process, and what my intentions are. If I am feeling foggy or tired, I ask students to be patient with me and lend their support. With this simple gesture empathy, warmth and compassion have a greater chance of being developed as classroom culture and students are able to attune to what is present.

A key part of my experience in checking-in with myself and inviting students to self-awareness is to notice what is happening in the body because it supports a capacity to become aware of their own and other's non-verbal experience. "We are not", Csordas

(1999) reminds us, “isolated subjectivities trapped within our bodies, but share an intersubjective milieu with others, we must also specify that a somatic mode of attention means not only attention to and with one's own body, but includes attention to the bodies of others (Csordas, as cited in Hervey, 2007, p. 98). In paying attention to the bodymind, I point out during the check-in how it is possible to have greater attunement with one's existential core, the presence of others, and our capacity to empathize and have compassion towards ourselves and others (Siegel, 2007). Knowing our own experience is the foundation for being able to relate to others' experiences. We cannot know the experience of others, only their behaviour (Laing, 1967), however, we can know our own experience and from this place open to knowing the possible experience of another.

As part of the check-in and some of the activities in my courses, the yin dimensions is facilitated by contemplative and artistic practices that help students develop the courage, imagination, impulse awareness and control, grounding, psychomotor skills and willingness to surrender to creative flow. Meditation and the arts enable an awakening of the heart/mind, *in part*, because of the practices and techniques that incline us “to see, to know, to shape, and to show” the heart/mind for what it was, what it is and what it may become (Kelly, forthcoming). A deep exploration and transformation of our subjectivity is not about taking the odd peak inside; sustained, repeated practice of uniting mind and body is required. Meditating and painting (amongst the many other ways of contemplating and creating) are vehicles that teach us about this *sustaining*. By attending over and over again to the object of inquiry *and* our subjective experience, the *sustenance* of the existential core is revealed; we learn how to concentrate, alleviate and prevent stress, become aware of and work with thoughts and emotions, loosen the boundaries of the ego, stay grounded with a highly activated nervous system, be in ‘flow’ states, increasingly perceive the subtle, see how there is beauty and grace in that which is painful and ugly, suspend judgment, be open to what is emerging and to what might touch us deeply and transform us.

Here is an example of how sustenance is cultivated in the classroom through a contemplative practice. I am teaching an undergraduate course on Environmental Inquiry and we are examining issues around lifestyle and how they relate to sustainability, ecology, and place. Today's class revolves around a walking meditation.

We spend a few minutes in silence at the beginning of the class, relaxing our bodies and settling into being in the classroom. Following a conversation about some of the responses to last week's activity, I preface us with the day's assignment. We are to do a 20-minute walk around campus in silence. We will walk slowly, but not so slow as to look like zombies! Although we would return to the classroom, there would be no particular destination. Our focus is to be on listening, which could be done through things such as feeling the contact of our feet with the ground, the movement of our bodies through space, a visual engagement with something, sounds, the breath, the various reactions and response arising during the walk. We would walk slowly and practice relaxing the body.

Our walk takes us past the campus greenhouse, the edge of the forest bordering Coote's Paradise, through walkways around the oldest buildings on campus, into the busy student centre at lunchtime and back to the classroom. I ask the students to pull out some paper and engage in some free writing, to write down any thoughts and reflections that are immediately coming to mind. After seven or so minutes of this, I ask everyone to look over the writing and circle a few words or statements that resonate with them and to write in response to these words and statements. I give them their homework for the week, an assignment to explore their neighbourhood on two silent walks and write about the experience.

Over the week, I receive two emails that stand out for me. One student expresses her pleasure doing the walking assignment. She says it is, unfortunately, a rare thing to actually enjoy doing an assignment for a class. She thanks me for being brave enough to take an entirely different approach to education and says that she believes this refreshing approach is really the way of the future. Another student writes of stopping out front of a house one evening and feeling a sense of deep calm and peace as she sees light coming through stained-glass windows. After her walk, she returns home to write and is surprised at the visions of her future being put down on paper.

The responses of these two students express feelings of gratitude, refreshment, peacefulness and discovery, the first student in context of the opportunity to even engage in this work, the second more directly with the walking contemplation. These are the kinds of things I had hoped would happen for most, if not all students in my

classroom. I agree with Heesoon Bai when she says that “if my students can leave the class more relaxed and energized than when they enter, I sure would read that as a sign of great success in my teaching” (Bai & Cohen, 2008, p. 3). Witnessing and transformation are not possible without sufficient energy. The flow of energy made possible by contemplative practices is not always about generating this energy for its own sake, but towards insight and transformation, towards as the one student wrote, *writing visions for our future that we didn't think we knew were possible*.

Bai (2009) makes the observation that when our minds are preoccupied and caught up in discursive, habitual thought we can experience mental and physical exhaustion. The phenomenal world of matter and the body is, in her words “a source of psycho-physical energy” (p. 144) that unless sustained contact with, leads to disembodiment, indifference and numbing. Gratitude, refreshment, and peacefulness are very alive, clear and animated states of being that we can readily palpate both within the mind and the body. Their energetic state is full, yet receptive and not overpowering. There is space to welcome and meet all things.

The stillness afforded by the slowing, pausing and stopping involved in contemplative activity conserves and generates energy by neutralizing and regulating the energy-intensive process of discursive thought. As “*perception becomes sensate or affective*” (Bai, 2009, pg. 145, emphasis in original), the enfoldment of consciousness through the body allows us to receive vital nourishment from the air, ground, sounds, and sights we are continually awash in. Although it is worth noting how cultivating mindful awareness impacts student learning⁵⁷, I find it more powerful to consider how it can support students like the one above in meaning-making and unfolding new visions for themselves and the future.

Curriculum as Way, Curriculum as Relationship

⁵⁷ A recent review of the literature on the relationship between mindfulness practice and education (Shapiro et. al, 2008) highlights empirical evidence that mindfulness may improve preparedness, attention, the ability to process information, and academic achievement (Napoli, Kretch & Holley, 2005). Mindfulness practice has been shown to decrease stress, anxiety, and depression and support the regulation of emotional reactions and positive psychological states (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010). Mindfulness may also support creative development, interpersonal skills, empathy and compassion.

Avoiding the problems that come with being prescriptive about what we should do, I side with Eppert (2008) in her caution about the dangers of being prescriptive about which contemplative practices should be used or how to best 'implement' them. Contemplative pedagogy is not about whether or not to sit in silence for five or 10 minutes at the beginning of class, read literature in an embodied way, or offer standardized trainings in taijiquan or yoga for students. It is through becoming aware of the energy in the dao-field that we learn how to *make use of* various contemplative practices, texts, and the arts to *support* conversation, awakening, and expression within ourselves, inside the classroom, and beyond (Eppert, 2008). This awareness helps us follow the process of change that is unfolding in the classroom and it is the being/non-being dimension of the Way that is central, the movement of yin and yang, not the knowledge/having dimension of our methods.

Rather than a curriculum based solely on doing or having, the practice of checking-in supports a curriculum that holds us, our questions and our potential and flows with questions of “who holds?”, “who asks”, and “who grows”? The role of educators here is one of Way-walkers, Way-pointers and caring interlocutors who are witnessing themselves, witnessing students, and are themselves witnessed by students and the empty space of the dao-field. This kind of participation by the educator is key. In Chapter 2 I shared concerns raised by Megan Boler (1999) that educators can be constructed as "caring nurturers" (p.22) professing a "pedagogy of love" (p. 22) and because of the unequal power relationship, can become the "caring police" (p. 22). Boler (1999) reckons that any pedagogy that addresses the heart should be "not confession, not therapy or spectating and voyeurism, but witnessing" (p. 18). The kind of witnessing she refers to is concerned with respecting the private, unspoken, unspeakable, and unknowable. Forcing confessions from students about their inner world puts students into a “discursive panopticon” where

individuals begin to construct their own ontological straightjackets within a public discourse on subjectivity in which confession becomes an obligatory practice of expunging aspects of the self, in which the purpose of enforced speech is to bring the self to light, not to illuminate and cultivate it, but to eradicate those parts that can thereby be seen by more discriminating eyes to be pollutant (de Castell, 1999, p. 306).

This kind of practice, de Castell (1999) argues, does not acknowledge our complexity and mystery but instead forces students to fit some standard of the 'authentic self'.

Without the ability for everyone to discover, make, and change one's own meanings, education becomes a process of blind indoctrination into the meanings of others, of crusading against mystery and the unknown, and a repression of the very inner impulses and forces that prompt us to seek connection with the universe through relationships with other humans and nature. The set of questions I raised at the opening of this dissertation—'who am I and who asks?'—complicates the curriculum because it is neither the educator nor the students that *hold* the answers. It is the *relationship* between the asker and the asked that the dance between the knowable, phenomenal world of the self and the 10,000 things, and the mystery of what gives rise to and takes back this world that teaches. When this space for such a relationship is held in an unhurried, warm, compassionate, and curious way, classrooms can be a strong psychic cauldron to hold and alchemically cook powerful emotions and other 'inner material' (Cohen & Bai, 2012).

Again, the image of the mandala comes to mind and I think of what specific geometry goes into supporting classrooms to be the kinds of cauldrons that can withstand the forces of transformation. At a personal level, what is it that holds the metal box containing my explosive heart? Revising the assumptions that I wrote about in Chapter 2, here are some tentative guides to engendering a living curriculum:

1. By focusing on cultivating our existential core we can bring about a sense of vitality, awareness, integrity and connectedness, all of which are valuable for being resilient through life's challenges. Attempting to fill the gaps and cracks in our core by chasing wealth, sensory pleasure, and power does not heal the suffering that comes from the potential in our core being restricted.
2. We are made of many different parts and stories, real and imaginary. These voices are sometimes coherent, sometimes conflicting and are often running beneath awareness and thus we have little control over them. Seeing how we are conditioned is the beginning of wisdom and starts with awareness ('sati' in

Buddhism) —a calm, spacious, and steady self-reflexive awareness that makes it possible for us to watch and notice, without rationalizing, without rejecting or disowning, what goes on in our mind-body-heart-spirit.

3. The boundary between 'I' and 'the world' is a porous membrane. What we think, feel and see both shapes and is shaped by the outer world. We can take responsibility for what we expose ourselves to, how we take action to satisfy our needs, and what we share across this boundary.
4. Everything exists in the here-and-now. The present is conditioned by and carries the energy of the past, which can be reinterpreted and transformed. The future is also in the present moment because it arises from actions and perceptions that occur in the present moment. The present moment is the time/space for taking action.
5. Life is composed of complimentary opposites and the interconnected ecology of the psyche and the cosmos is continuously in flux between opposites. To reject any part of our humanity (i.e. painful, unfamiliar parts) is to disrupt this ecology and fail to see that the dark, painful parts can disclose to us how we can be more whole.

The reason these kinds of assumptions grant ontological security is that they do not pathologize our wounding and conditioning by treating it as garbage to be thrown out or rejected. They invite us to include our patterns and that which exists on or beyond the margins of a clearly defined 'self' as raw material that could be potentially used to recreate ourselves, and thus our perception of the world. They also invite us to pay close attention to experience before we formulate our judgments, boundaries and conclusions. This offering of attention is important because to state these assumptions is one thing, but to make them personal and put them into action and practice is another; otherwise they remain objective, third-person forms of knowledge disconnected from subjective, first-person and intersubjective, second-person ways of knowing⁵⁸.

58 Sarath (2006) makes a useful distinction between three modes of inquiry: "Whereas third-person education is content- or object-driven, second person education is more process-oriented,

Meaning-Making and Meaning-Unmaking

The ontological security granted by these assumptions, genuinely practiced, is vital in education because of the rapid changes in knowledge, economies, institutional structures, technology, and cultural hybridization. Our world is changing quickly and the maps we have inherited from our parents, educators, and leaders are not sufficient to meet the demands of adapting to and creating a new world. There are some important distinctions to be made here about educating for competency and educating for capability. Competencies are working knowledge, or what students are able to do in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes, demonstrated and assessed against agreed standards in familiar environments with familiar tasks (Fraser & Greenhalgh, 2001). With enough practice at something in one specific setting, it is possible to gain a degree of mastery and understanding in this setting. Capability, in contrast, is “having justified confidence in your ability to take appropriate and effective action to formulate and solve problems in both familiar and unfamiliar and changing settings” (Cairns, 2000, p. 2). Capable people are creative, know how to direct their own learning, work well with others and can apply themselves in both novel and familiar situations (Hase and Kenyon 2004). It is important to be open to and know when and how to create new knowledge in response to new and uncertain situations.

Competencies help us in known and predictable contexts, however students often do not get the opportunity to develop capabilities because many educators have “a career-long habituation to being the sole engineer of the learning process” (Scardamallia 2002, 4). Developing capability means standing alongside our students as they leap into the unfamiliar, an uncomfortable action for most instructors because it exposes gaps in our own knowledge. Educating for capability, in addition to competence, must avoid being prescriptive about content and goals and focus on the process of helping students

which brings us into the realm of creativity. For example, we can study art through third-person theoretical or historical perspectives, and we can also study art from a second person vantage point by creating our own works, not at the exclusion of, but in conjunction with, third-person inquiry. First-person education involves the experience of the innermost regions of the self, the knower, through meditation practices.” (Sarath, 2006, p. 1817)

become self-directed and collaborative learners (Fraser & Greenhalgh 2001, p. 799).
The result of educating for capability will be that:

"As soon as students realize that their lessons are about their meanings, then the entire psychological context of schools is different. Learning is no longer a contest between them and something outside of them, whether the problem be a poem, a historical conclusion, a scientific theory, or anything else [T]he meaning-maker metaphor puts the student at the center of the learning process. It makes both possible and acceptable a plurality of meanings, for the environment does not exist only to impose standardized meanings but rather to help students improve their unique meaning-making capabilities. And this is the basis of the process of learning how to learn, how to deal with the otherwise 'meaningless,' how to cope with change that requires new meanings to be made." (Postman & Weingartner, 1969, p. 97)

The trouble and distress starts to get underway, however, when our meaning-making becomes only about coping and survival and leaves us feeling hollow and without vitality. Ontological security gets mistaken for having a firm sense of being in control of the meaning making process. Zygmunt Bauman (2000) writes that we live in an age of 'liquid modernity' where change is so quick that by the time we've arrived at some new understanding of ourselves and the world, the rules have changed. In such an age, he argues, we can easily become tourists and voyeurs that never have to really commit to anything. Larry Green (2012), a therapist and educator, points out that many people are feeling somehow without purpose or meaning in this state of affairs. Why commit to something when you will likely have to change? Only through connecting with the inner most felt sense, our pre-reflective self, he suggests, can we discover the images and metaphors that will break us from the cocoon of our assumptions into the next stage of growth. We must also allow our meanings to be unmade lest they become our prisons.

Fatherhood: Death and Re-birth

The image of the knife cutting through distortions, themes of fatherhood and the metaphors of the dojo walls, like everything else constructed and signified in this dissertation run the risk of being reified as unchanging facts that I take unmindful refuge

in. There is the danger that I mistake the descriptors and handles of the Dao for the Dao itself. Buddhist teacher Chogyam Trungpa (2002/1973) warns me against the psychological and spiritual materialism that can seep in when I accept and inhabit the metaphor without recognizing what it is not. Psychological materialism is the belief that a particular idea, view, or identity will bring a release from my existential distress. Spiritual materialism is the belief that having a particular, temporary state of mind is the answer to my distress and that by meditating in the right way, I can avoid uncomfortable emotions and inner and outer conflict. The problem in both cases is that I remain ignorant to what is actually happening in the moment.

As I bring this dissertation to a close, new struggles are arising in my life. My landlord has just sold the house our family was renting and we are unsure where we are moving to. I have no job lined up and I wonder where a person like myself and my interests fit in the world. In the past two years I have written most of this dissertation, got married, and had a baby. I am now experiencing fully the shock to my vitality and the fracturing of my expectations about how my life *should* be going at this point. I am exhausted and feel that things *should* be easier. I *shouldn't* have to try so hard. There *should* be a good job waiting for me at the end of this journey, the next stepping stone clearly laid out before me. In the face of disappointment, my attention is being called to where I'm resisting the experience of transforming out of old roles and into new ones. In heeding the call to participate fully in these transformations, certain preparations, rituals and commitments need to be made to undergo what is essentially an alchemical process in which the old structures of my identity are cooked black and from which new forms arise.

My ego, having exhausted its will against the river of reality, needs to enter into darkness and the inferno of the soul. Joseph Campbell (2008) writes of this as the Hero's Journey into the underworld and the return of a transformed being, a proto-narrative found in cultures all around the world. The *phenomenology* of this process, I am coming to believe, is really one of death and re-birth. As a way of closing this dissertation, I describe how the experience of trying to cope with various expectations about how I would *hope* my life to be as a new father with a successful career leads to exhaustion and hopelessness. By going into the dark pit at the end of my sanity rope the "I" construct is allowed to die, and I speak to how space is needed for mourning,

resting and preparing for the emergence of a new person. I describe this descent and my felt-sense of death as a state of hopelessness that opens up to surrender. I speculate about hopelessness as my “gate” to the other side and make preparations for what will guide me forward.

Moved by Emotion: Contemplation and Preparation

I am tense inside, feel very cut off from the world, narrow. I shouldn't have to put up with the 3:00am crying. I have so many other things to do, like sleep. This is very irritating and frustrating. I hate being a parent today. I want to shake my child to make him stop screaming. I break down in tears. When is it going to get through to him that he has to sleep?

Steph notices my mood and doesn't like it. She tells me she feels cut off from me. She worries about what Theo is picking up. I don't like it either, I feel miserable. I feel stuck in it. What am I angry about? Is it about having an expectation that I have to fulfill all of these different roles perfectly, now? Where has my patience gone? Where is the trust that this is going to work out? I feel ashamed that I feel anger. Life should be easier than I'm finding it. I don't want to stop and feel the anger because it means that I can't attend to the 8 million things that need my attention: my wife, looking after Theo, getting food, cooking, doing counselling courses, applying for jobs, changing the cat litter, dealing with a landlord evicting us, figuring where are we going to live, finishing my PhD.

I see anger as the emotion calling me to pay attention to what is going on under the surface, to look deeper into my situation. What is this anger about? Where's the space for myself to feel all of this, to look through the emptiness of all of this? Who is tense? Who is the parent? Who is breaking down in tears? Who is the one who should have to put up with the anger? Who is asking these questions? I feel drawn to sitting still for a few moments while mamma and Theo nap. I can feel the swirl of sensations in my gut and chest. I breathe and the sense of rush and push to be effective at something in the moment gives way to the tick of the clock and the hum of the fridge. This 'state' I'm deciding to call anger is getting some attention. We have a talk with each other and the gist of the conversation is that this is all too “too much, too fast” and the braid of

expectations I've constructed to cope and get through it all is starting to unravel. I've just finished writing a PhD on mindfulness and I feel unsatisfied. I have no job and no income as of the new year. Our landlord is selling the house and we have to find a new place to live. I don't have the spirit to hold this trip together any more. The ground keeps moving.

I have a dream. I am in a cafeteria with my computer, an item that defines the work I do and my identity as a productive, educated person who has control and purpose. A young guy comes in and grabs my stuff and runs for the door. I chase after him, beat him to the ground, take my stuff and return to my seat. The guy comes back in and cries, apologizing to me. One take on the dream is that I'm refusing to give up what I define myself by and will fight to protect this identity. I feel addicted to achieving a lasting security in life and am pissed off and totally exhausted because it's not happening.

Entering Hopelessness: The Holding Space of Relationship

October 24th, 2013. I have barely a scrap of will to manage all my different roles and expectations about performing diligently in all my roles. I am hopeless that I will get any work done today. I take Theo for most of the day, walk around the neighbourhood, eat a cinnamon bun. I enjoy my coffee. I don't plan any of this, and really, I can't because it's Steph's day to go to work. I make a point of not going into a story that forms inside me about how it's always *me* who is making food and doing the dishes, again. Instead, I ask for encouragement and recognition from Steph for my efforts today. She is happy to meet this need and it puts a smile on my face. I feel more at ease.

A few hours later, I am on the couch curled up in fetal position. I have relaxed just enough that I can now start to feel the intensity of emotion and sensation that's been bubbling for months. I have no more energy to fight and my mind is exhausted. I momentarily enter a black hole. My body is vibrating and all I see is darkness. Out of the darkness the phrase "I give up" comes to me. The effort to get ahead is now utterly futile and I feel broken, or at least breaking through. My wife can hear me crying from the other room and asks if I need her support. Simply having her accept my need to feel

and process the pain of this difficult time is enough support for me in the moment. There is a sense that I can die in this relationship with her and be someone that is still responsible, but more at ease with the challenges, uncertainties and limitations of this new life. I don't know what this will look like or how to get there—I'm too tired.

Sitting in the Dark, in the Sunshine

I go for the tough to digest yet compassionate wisdom of Buddhist teacher Pema Chodron. She gives voice to my feeling of hopelessness:

In Tibetan there is an interesting word: ye tang che. The ye part means "totally, completely," and the rest of it means "exhausted." Altogether, ye tang che means totally tired out. We might say "totally fed up." It describes an experience of complete hopelessness, of completely giving up hope. This is an important point. This is the beginning of the beginning. Without giving up hope that there is somewhere better to be, that there's someone better to be or we will never relax with where are or who we are. (Chodron, 1997, p. 40)

The anger is feedback about my assumptions being out of step with reality. The reality of my life is different from what I expected it to be. I thought there would be some stability, security and ease after all this hard work but I'm not finding it. I've been "pushing the river" until exhaustion and the only sane move at this point is to abandon hope and go with the river. Poet David Whyte, an exquisite writer on keeping the soul alive in our work, writes that:

We think we exist only when our life looks like the first half of the cycle, when our moon is waxing, when our sense of ourselves is growing and getting larger, when we are succeeding or stepping up to the line for promotion. If things are dying or falling away, we dismiss it, we refuse to see it as the second half of the very same cycle and think there is something "wrong" with us. We think something terrible has happened and we need to do a whole list of things to put it right. Much of our stress and subsequent exhaustion at work comes from our wish to keep ourselves at full luminescence all month, even when our interior "moon" may be just a sliver in the sky or about to fade from sight altogether. It takes tremendous energy to

keep up a luminescent front when the interior surface is fading into darkness. In some ways we are constantly preventing our own re-birth into new cycles and greater lives, and instead work 24 hours a day keeping a wraith like image of our former selves alive, long after it's time has passed [...] It's as if Dante were to say to Virgil "This is an important path for me to tread, but these are my terms, I want a signed agreement that you won't take me anywhere where I can stumble and fall, or anywhere where it is really dark. No moonless nights thank you". Yes, we say, I want the destiny that awaits me, but I want complete safety while I explore it. (Whyte, 2002, pp. 286-287)

The luminescence that's powered the many changes over the past few years of my life is giving way now to a waning phase. My family and I leave Monday morning for a small Mexican village for an open period of time. Our stuff is going into storage. Neither my wife nor I have work and we don't know where our little family is going to end up. My PhD is all but finished and so too are the last of my graduate courses (I didn't mention that I also completed course requirements to become a clinical counselor over the past two years as well). I need some time to celebrate and mourn this change and transition and I want to rest my mind and body. I want to regroup and await the signs and messages that show me a way through to the other side. Hope does not work here. Instead I will need to listen to the subtle whispers in the wind and waves that call me into following the next steps in my journey.

References

- Abram, D. (1996). *Spell of the sensuous: Perception and language in a more-than-human-world*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.
- Adler, J. (2002). *Offering from the conscious body: The discipline of authentic movement*. Rochester, NY: Inner Traditions.
- Adyashanti. (1999). *Teachings*. Retrieved from:
http://www.adyashanti.org/index.php?file=writings_inner&writingid=31
- Ainsworth, M., Blehar, M., Waters, E., & Wall, S. (1978). *Patterns of attachment*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Allione, T. (2008). *Feeding your demons: Ancient wisdom for resolving inner conflict*. New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company.
- Aoki, T. (2000). Locating living pedagogy in teacher 'research': Five metonymic moments. In E. Hasebe-Ludt & W. Hurren (Eds.), *Curriculum intertext: Place/language/pedagogy* (pp. 1–9). New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Aoki, T. (2005/1990). Sonare and videre: A story, three echoes and a linger note. In W. F. Pinar & R. L. Irwin (Eds.), *Curriculum in a new key: The collected works of Ted T. Aoki* (pp. 367–376). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Aposhyan, S. (1999). *Natural intelligence: Body-mind integration and human development*. Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins.
- Aposhyan, S. (2004). *Body-mind psychotherapy: Principles techniques and practical applications*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton.
- Applebaum, D. (1995). *The stop*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Assagioli, R. (1968). *Notes on education*. Retrieved from <http://www.aap-psychoanalysis.org/resources/assagioli-pubs.htm>
- Bagley, C., & Cancienne, M. (Eds.) (2002). *Dancing the data*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Bai, H. (2001a). Cultivating democratic citizenship: Towards intersubjectivity. In W. Hare & J. P. Portelli (Eds.), *Philosophy of education: Introductory readings* (3rd ed., pp. 307–319). Calgary, AB: Detselig.
- Bai, H. (2001b). Beyond educated mind: Towards a pedagogy of mindfulness. In B. Hockings, J. Haskell, & W. Linds (Eds.), *Unfolding bodymind: Exploring possibilities through education* (pp. 86–99). Brandon, VT: Foundation for Educational Renewal.

- Bai, H. (2006). Philosophy for education: Cultivating human agency. *Paideusis*, 15(1), 7–19.
- Bai, H. (2009). Re-animating the universe: Environmental education and philosophical animism. In M. McKenzie, H. Bai, P. Hart, & B. Jickling (Eds.), *Fields of green: Restorying culture, environment, and education* (pp. 135-151). NJ: Hampton Press.
- Bai, H., & Banack, H. (2006). To see a world in a grain of sand: Complexity and moral education. *Complicity*, 3(1), 5–20.
- Bai, H., & Cohen, A. (2008). Breathing qi (ch'i), following Dao (Tao): Transforming this violence-ridden world. In C. Eppert & H. Wong (Eds.), *Cross-cultural studies in curriculum* (pp. 35-54). New York, NY: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Bai, H., Cohen, A., Culham, T., Park, S., Rabi, S., Scott, C. & Tait, S. (2014). A call for wisdom in higher education: Contemplative voices from the Dao-field. In Gunnlaugson, O., Bai, H., Sarath, E. & Scott, C. (Eds.) *Contemplative approaches to learning and inquiry*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Bai, H., Park, S., & Cohen, A. (forthcoming). Classroom as dojo: Contemplative teaching and learning as martial art. In A. Zajonc & D. Barbezat (Eds.). *Cultivating attention, understanding, connection and insight: Contemplative practices in higher education*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Bai, H., Scott, C., & Donald, B. (2009). Contemplative pedagogy and revitalization of teacher education. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 55(3), 319–334.
- Barks, C. (2009). *Rumi: The book of love*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.
- Bauman, Z. (2000). *Liquid modernity*. Cambridge: Blackwell.
- Beck, K., Cohen, A., & Falkenberg, T. (2007). Bridging the divide between being and knowing: In quest of care-ethical agency. *Paideusis*, 16(2), 45–53.
- Bernhardt, P. (2004). Individuation, mutual connection and the body's resources: An interview with Lisbeth Marcher. In I. MacNaughton (Ed.), *Body, breath and consciousness* (pp. 93–130). Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books.
- Bernhardt, P., Bentzen, M., & Issacs, J. (2004). Waking the body ego. In I. MacNaughton (Ed.), *Body, breath and consciousness* (pp. 131–204). Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books.
- Bishop, S., Lau, M., Shapiro, S., Carlson, L., Anderson, N., Carmody, J., & Devins, G. (2004). Mindfulness: A proposed operational definition. *Clinical Psychology*:

- Science and Practice*, 11, 230–241.
- Blumenfeld-Jones, D. (2008). Dance, choreography, and social science research. In A. Cole & G. Knowles (Eds.), *Handbook of the arts in qualitative research* (pp. 175–184). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Press.
- Boler, M. (1999). *Feeling power: Emotions and education*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Bowlby, J. (1988). *A secure base: Clinical applications of attachment theory*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Brantbjerg, M. (2004). Caring for yourself while caring for others. In I. MacNaughton (Ed.), *Body, breath and consciousness* (pp. 227–239). Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books.
- Brantbjerg, M. (2007). *When the therapist is aroused. Sexual feelings in the therapyroom*. Retrieved from:
<http://www.brantbjerg.dk/moaikuenglish/englishpdf/whenthe therapist1.2usl.pdf>
- Brauen, M. (1997). *The mandala: Sacred circle in Tibetan Buddhism*. London, UK: Serindia Press.
- Bresler, L. (Ed.) (2004). *Knowing bodies, moving minds: Towards embodied teaching and learning*. London, UK: Kluwer Academic Press.
- Bresler, L. (Ed.) (2007). *International handbook of research in arts education*. Dordrecht, NL: Springer.
- Brook, P. (1968). *The empty space*. New York, NY: Penguin Books
- Burston, D., & Frie, R. (2006). *Psychotherapy as a human science*. Pittsburg, PA: Duquesne University Press Press.
- Cairns, L. (2000). *The process/outcome approach to becoming a capable organisation*. Paper presented at the Australian Capability Network Conference, pp. 1-14. Sydney, Australia.
- Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. (2007). *Dying for attention*. Retrieved from:
http://www.cbc.ca/national/specialfeatures/kimveer_gill.html
- Cancienne, M., & Snowber, C. (2003). Writing rhythm: Movement as method. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 9(2), 237–253.
- Chambers, C., Hasebe-Ludt, E., Leggo, C., & Sinner, A. (Eds.). (2012). *A heart of wisdom: Life writing as empathetic inquiry*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Chan, K. (2002). *Teacher education and embodiment: Cultural diversity as concept and practice*. Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. (OSU 1311963242)

- Chen Tai Chi Center. (2004). *The ancillary tai chi exercises*. Retrieved from: http://www.taichichen.com/chenresources_videos.htm
- Chodron, P. (1997). *The wisdom of no escape*. Boston, MA: Shambhala.
- Claxton, G. (2000). The anatomy of intuition. In T. Atkinson & G. Claxton (Eds.), *The intuitive practitioner: On the value of not always knowing what one is doing* (pp. 32-52). Philadelphia, PA: Open University Press.
- Claxton, G. (2006). Beyond cleverness: how to be smart without thinking. In J. Henry (Ed.), *Creative management and development* (pp. 47–63). London, UK: Sage.
- Cohen, A. (2009). *Gateway to the Dao-field: Essays for the awakening educator*. Amherst, NY: Cambria Press.
- Cohen, A., & Bai, H. (2007). Dao and Zen of teaching: Classroom as enlightenment field. *Educational Insights*, 11(3). Retrieved from: <http://www.ccfi.educ.ubc.ca/publication/insights/v11n03/articles/bai/bai.html>
- Cohen, A., & Bai, H. (2012). Minding what really matters: Relationship as teacher. In C. Chambers, E. Hasebe-Ludt, A. Sinner, & C. Leggo (Eds.), *A heart of wisdom: Life writing as empathic inquiry* (pp. 257–266). New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Collin, A. (1996). Re-thinking the relationship between theory and practice: Practitioners as map-readers, map-makers, or jazz players? *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 24(1), 67–81.
- Corbin, C. B., & McKenzie, T. L. (2008). Physical activity promotion: A responsibility for both K-12 physical education and kinesiology. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, 79(6), 47–56.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1997). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*. New York, NY: Harper Perennial.
- Csordas, T. (1999). Embodiment and cultural phenomenology. In G. Weiss & H. F. Haber (Eds.), *Perspectives on embodiment: The intersections of nature and culture* (pp. 143-162). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Davey, H.E. (2007). *The Japanese way of the artist*. Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press.
- de Castell, S. (1999). On finding one's place in the text: Literacy as a technology of self-formation. In W. F. Pinar (Ed.), *Contemporary curriculum discourses: Twenty years of JCT* (pp. 398–411). New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Denton, D. (1998). *In the tenderness of stone: Liberating consciousness through the awakening of the heart*. Pittsburgh, PA: Sterling House.
- Denton, D. (2005). Toward a sacred discourse: Reconceptualizing the heart through

- metaphor. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 11(5), 752–770.
- Depraz, N., Varela, F., & Vermersch, P. (2003). *On becoming aware*. Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins.
- Draeger, D. F., & Smith, R. W. (1980). *Comprehensive Asian fighting arts*. Tokyo, Japan: Kodansha International.
- Drapela, V. (1990). The value of theories for counseling practitioners. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling*, 13, 19–26.
- Eisner, E. (2008). Art and knowledge. In A. Cole & J. Knowles (Eds.), *Handbook of the arts in qualitative research: Perspectives, methodologies, examples, and issues* (pp. 3-12). London, UK: Sage.
- Engler, J. (1984). Therapeutic aims in psychotherapy and meditation: Developmental stages in the representation of self. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 16(1), 25–61.
- Eppert, C. (2008). Fear, (educational) fictions of character, and Buddhist insights for an arts-based writing curriculum. In C. Eppert & H. Wang (Eds.), *Cross-cultural studies in curriculum* (pp. 55–108). New York, NY: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Eppert, C., & Wang, H. (Eds.). (2008). *Cross-cultural studies in curriculum: Eastern thought, educational insights*. New York, NY: Lawrence Erlbaum, Taylor and Francis.
- Epstein, M. (2005). *Open to desire: The truth about what the Buddha taught*. New York, NY: Gotham Books.
- Fels, L. (1998). In the wind clothes dance on a line performative inquiry—a (re)search methodology. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, 14(1), 27–36.
- Fels, L. (2011). A dead man’s sweater: Performative inquiry embodied and recognized. In S. Schonmann (Ed.), *Key concepts in theatre drama education* (pp. 339–343). Netherlands: Sense.
- Fontana, D. (1999). *Meditating with mandalas*. London, UK: Duncan Baird.
- Fraser, S., & Greenhalgh, T. (2001). Complexity science: Coping with complexity: educating for capability. *British Medical Journal*, 323, 799–803.
- Fromm, E. (1954). The psychology of normalcy. *Dissent*, 1(2), 39–43.
- Fromm, E. (1976). *To have or to be?* New York, NY: Continuum.
- Gatto, J. T. (2003). *The underground history of American education*. Oxford, England: Oxford Village Press.

- Giroux, H., & Purpel, D. (Eds.). (1983). *The hidden curriculum and moral education*. Berkeley, CA: McCutchan Publishing Corporation.
- Green, J. L. (2012). *The relationship between the prereflective self and the reflective mind: Keeping the head and heart together*. Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. (ETD 7543)
- Greenberg, M.T., Domitrovich, C., & Bumbarger, B. (2001). The prevention of mental disorders in school-aged children: Current state of the field. *Prevention & Treatment, 4*, 1-62.
- Greenwood, M. (1997). *Braving the void: Journeys into healing*. Victoria, Canada: Paradox Publishing.
- Griffin, S. (1995). *The eros of everyday life: Essays on ecology, gender, and society*. Toronto, Canada: Doubleday.
- Gunnlaugson, O. (2009). Establishing second-person forms of contemplative education: An inquiry into four conceptions of intersubjectivity. *Integral Review, 5*(1), 25–50.
- Halprin, A. (1995). *Moving towards life: Five decades of transformational dance*. Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press.
- Halprin, A. (2000). *Dance as a healing art: Returning to health with movement and imagery*. Mendocino, CA: LifeRhythm Energy Field.
- Hamill, S., & Seaton, J. (Trans.). (1998). *The essential Chuang Tzu*. Boston, MA: Shambhala.
- Handy, C. (2000). *21 ideas for managers*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Hanna, T. (1988). *Somatics: Reawakening the minds' control of movement, flexibility, and health*. Reading, MA: Addison Wesley.
- Hart, T. (2004). Opening the contemplative mind in the classroom. *Journal of Transformative Education, 2*(1), 28–46.
- Hart, T. (2008). Interiority and education: Exploring the neurophenomenology of contemplation and its potential role in learning. *Journal of Transformative Education, 6*(4), 235–250.
- Hartley, L. (1995). *Wisdom of the body moving: An introduction to body-mind centering*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books.
- Hawkins, A. (1991). *Moving from within: A new method for dance making*. Chicago, IL: a capella books.
- Hillman, J. (1996). *The soul's code: In search of character and calling*. New York, NY: Random House.

- Hocking, J., Haskell, B., & Linds, W. (Eds.). (2001). *Unfolding bodymind: Exploring possibility through education*. Brandon, VT: Foundation for Educational Renewal.
- hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Jacks, D. L. (1932). *Education through recreation*. New York, NY: Harper and Brothers.
- Johnson, D. (Ed.). (1995). *Bone, breath, & gesture: Practices of embodiment*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books.
- Johnson, R. (1986). *Inner work: Using dreams and active imagination for personal growth*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.
- Jones, S. H. (2005). Autoethnography. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 763–791). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Jung, C. (1954). *The practice of psychotherapy: Essays on the psychology of the transference and other subjects*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Jung, C. (1955/1933). *Modern man in search of a soul*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt.
- Jung, C. (1971). Psychological types. *The collected works of C.G. Jung* (Vol. 6). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press
- Jung, C. (1999/1953). *Two essays on analytical psychology*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (1990). *Full catastrophe living*. New York, NY: Bantam Dell.
- Kates, I. C. (2005). The creative journey: Personal creativity as soul work. In J. Miller, S. Karsten, D. Denton, D. Orr, & I. C. Kates (Eds.), *Holistic learning and spirituality in education* (pp. 19–27). Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Keeney, B. (2009). *The creative therapist: The art of awakening a session*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Kelly, V. (forthcoming). To see, to know, to shape, to show: The arts as catalyst, catharsis, and crucible. In B. Bickel, C. Leggo, & S. Walsh (Eds.), *Contemplative and artistic practices in research and pedagogy*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Kim, M. K. (2009). *Cultivating qi in baguazhang: Models and embodied experiences of extra-ordinary health in a Chinese internal martial art*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. (501914383)
- Knowles, G., Neilsen, L, Cole, A., & Luciani, T. (Eds.). (2004). *Provoked by art: Theorizing arts-informed inquiry*. Halifax, Canada: Backalong Books.
- Krishnamurti, J. (1953). *Education and the significance of life*. New York, NY: Harper and Brothers.
- Krishnamurti, J. (1974). *Krishnamurti on education*. New York, NY: Harper and Row.

- Kumar, S. (2002). *You are therefore I am: A declaration of dependence*. Devon, England: Green Books.
- Laing, R. D. (1967). *The politics of experience*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1999). *Philosophy in the flesh: The embodied mind and its challenge to western thought*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Lao-Tzu. (1988). *Tao te ching*. (S. Mitchell, Trans.). New York, NY: Harper and Row.
- Lao-Tsu. (1991/1972). *Lao Tsu–Tao te ching*. (G. Feng & J. English, Trans.). Retrieved from <http://www.wussu.com/laotzu/laotzu16.html>
- Laursen, P. F. (2005). The authentic teacher. In D. Beijaard, P. Meijer, G. Morine-Dershimer, & H. Tillema (Eds.), *Teacher professional development in changing conditions* (pp. 199–212). Dordrecht, NL: Springer.
- Leggo, C. (1996). Dancing with desire: A meditation on psychoanalysis, politics, and pedagogy. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 2(2), 233-242.
- Levy, D. (2007). No time to think: Reflections on information technology and contemplative scholarship. *Ethics and Information Technology*, 9, 237–249.
- Lloyd, R. (2011). Awakening movement consciousness in the physical landscapes of literacy: Leaving, reading and being moved by one's trace. *Phenomenology & Practice*, 5(2), 70–92.
- London, P. (Ed.). (1994). *A guide to exemplary art education curriculums*. Reston, VA: NAEA.
- London, P. (2007). Concerning the spiritual in art education. In L. Bresler (Ed.), *International handbook of research in arts education* (pp. 1479–1492). Dordrecht, NL: Springer.
- Lorge, P. (2011). *Chinese martial arts from antiquity to the twenty-first century*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Malewski, E. (Ed.). (2010). *Curriculum studies handbook: The next moment*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Mangusson, J. (2011). *Addressing political violence through feminist martial arts*. Paper presented at the conference Performing Philosophy, Toronto, University of Toronto, Fall 2011.
- Masters, R. (2012). *Catharsis*. Retrieved from: http://robertmasters.com/Work_Section/catharsis.htm
- Maturana, H., & Varela, F. (1992). *Tree of knowledge: The biological roots of human understanding* (2nd ed.). Boston, MA: Shambhala.

- McKenzie, M., Bai, H., Hart, P., & Jickling, B. (Eds.). (2009). *Fields of green: Restorying culture, environment, and education*. NJ: Hampton Press.
- Mercer, J. (2006). *Understanding attachment: Parenting, child care, and emotional development*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.
- Meyer, K. (2010). Living inquiry: Me, myself and other. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, 26(1), 85–96.
- Miller, J. (1985). Transformation as an aim of education. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, 7(1), 94–152.
- Miller, J. (1993). *The holistic teacher*. Toronto, Canada: OISE Press.
- Miller, J. (1994). *The contemplative practitioner: Meditation in education and the professions*. Toronto, Canada: OISE Press.
- Miller, J. (1996). *The holistic curriculum*. Toronto, Canada: OISE Press.
- Miller, J. (1999). Presence and soul and the classroom. *Orbit*, 30(2), 10–12.
- Miller, J. (2000). *Education and the soul: Toward a spiritual curriculum*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Miller, R. (1990/1997). *What are schools for? Holistic education in American culture*. Brandon, VT: Holistic Education Press.
- Miller, R. (1991). *New directions in education: Selections from Holistic Education Review*. Brandon, VT: Holistic Education Press.
- Miller, R. (1995). A holistic philosophy of educational freedom. In R. Miller (Ed.), *Educational freedom for a democratic society: A critique of national standards, goals, and curriculum*. Brandon, VT: Foundation for Educational Renewal.
- Miller, R. (2000). *Caring for new life: Essays on holistic education*. Brandon, VT: Foundation for Educational Renewal.
- Milloy, J. (2005). Gesture of absence: Eros of writing. *Janus Head*, 8(2), 545–552.
- Montessori, M. (1948/1973). *To educate the human potential*. Madras, India: Kalakshetra.
- Mindell, Amy. (1995). *Metaskills: The spiritual art of therapy*. Portland, OR: Lao Tse Press.
- Mindell, Arnold. (1982). *Dreambody*. Santa Monica, CA: Sigo Press.
- Mindell, Arnold. (1986). *River's way: The process science of the dreambody*. New York, NY: Viking-Penguin-Arkana.
- Mindell, Arnold. (1992). *The leader as martial artist*. San Francisco, CA: Harper.
- Moustakas, C. (1990). *Heuristic design*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Myers, T. (1998). Kinesthetic dystonia: What bodywork can offer a new physical education. *Journal of Bodywork and Movement Therapies*, 2(2), 101–114.
- Nhat Hanh, T. (1987). *Being Peace*. A. Kotler (Ed.). Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press.
- Noddings, N. (2003). *Happiness and education*. Cambridge, UK: University of Cambridge.
- Orr, David. (2004). *Earth in mind: On education, environment, and the human prospect*. Washington, DC: Island Press.
- Orr, Deborah. (2005). Minding the soul in education: Conceptualizing and teaching the whole person. In J. Miller, S. Karsten, D. Denton, D. Orr, & I. C. Kates (Eds.), *Holistic learning and spirituality in education*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Pallaro, P. (Ed.). (1999). *Authentic movement: A collection of essays by Mary Starks Whitehouse, Janet Adler and Joan Chodrow*. Philadelphia, PA: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Palmer, P. (1998). *The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Palmer, P., & Zajonc, A. (2010). *The heart of higher education: A call to renewal*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Palmer, W. (1994). *The intuitive body: Discovering the wisdom of conscious embodiment and Aikido*. Berkeley, CA: Blue Snake Books.
- Park, S. (2007). Proceedings of the 5th Complexity Science and Education Research Conference: *Facilitating inquiry-based learning as a complex adaptive system*. Vancouver, Canada.
- Park, S., & Cohen, A. (2010). Exploring the Dao-field: Practicing alchemy and philosophy in the classroom. *Transformative Dialogues*, 3(2), 1–17.
- Pinar, W. (2012). *What is curriculum theory?* New York, NY: Routledge.
- Portelli, J., & Vibert, A. (2001). Beyond common educational standards: Toward a curriculum of life. In J. Portelli, & P. Solomon (Eds.), *The erosion of democracy in education* (pp. 63–82). Calgary, Canada: Detselig Enterprises.
- Powell, K. (2007). Moving from still life: Emerging conceptions of the body in arts education. In L. Bresler (Ed.), *International handbook of research in arts education* (pp. 1083–1086). Dordrecht, NL: Springer.
- Pryer, A. (2001). Breaking hearts: Towards an erotics of pedagogy. In B. Hocking, J. Haskell, & W. Linds (Eds.), *Unfolding bodymind: Exploring possibility through*

- education* (pp. 133–141). Brandon, VT: Foundation For Educational Renewal.
- Robinson, K. (2001). *Out of our minds: Learning to be creative*. Oxford, England: Capstone Publishing.
- Romano, E., Tremblay, R. E., Vitaro, F., Zoccolillo, M., & Pagani, L. (2001). Prevalence of psychiatric diagnosis and the role of perceived impairment: findings from an adolescent community sample. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 42, 451–46.
- Romanyshyn, R. (2012). Complex education: Depth psychology as a mode of ethical pedagogy. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 44(1), 96–116.
- Ross, D. (2009). *Aristotle: The Nicomachean ethics*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Rossi, E. (2007). *Shen: Psycho-emotional aspects of Chinese medicine*. London, UK: Elsevier.
- Roth, H. (2006). Contemplative studies: Prospects for a new field. *Teachers College Record*, 108(9), 1787–1815.
- Rumi, J. (2004). *The essential Rumi*. (C. Barks, Trans.). New York, NY: HarperOne.
- Sarath, E. (2003). Meditation in higher education: The next wave? *Innovative Higher Education*, 27(4), 215–233.
- Sarath, E. (2006). Meditation, creativity, and consciousness: Charting future terrain within higher education. *Teachers College Record*, 108(9), 1816–1841.
- Schellenbaum, P. (1988/1990). *The wound of the unloved: Releasing the life energy* (T. Nevill, Trans.). Dorset, GB: Element Books.
- Schneider, K. (2004). *Rediscovery of awe: Splendor, mystery, and the fluid center of life*. St. Paul, MN: Paragon House.
- Schonert-Reichl, K., & Lawlor, M. S. (2010). The effects of mindfulness-based education program of pre- and early adolescents' well-being and social and emotional competence. *Mindfulness*, 1, 137–151.
- Schonert-Reichl, K. A., & Scott, F. (2009). Effectiveness of “The Roots of Empathy” program in promoting children’s emotional and social competence: A summary of research findings. In M. Gordon (Ed.), *The roots of empathy: Changing the world child by child* (pp. 239–252). Toronto, Canada: Thomas Allen Publishers.
- Senzaki, N., & Reps, P. (1957). 101 Zen stories. (N. Senzaki & P. Reps, Trans.). In *Zen flesh, Zen bones* (p. 19). Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle.
- Sheets-Johnstone, M. (2009). *The corporeal turn*. Exter, UK: Imprint Academic.

- Sheets-Johnstone, M. (1999). *The primacy of movement*. Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins.
- Siegel, D. (2007). *The mindful brain*. New York, NY: WW Norton.
- Simon, R. (1992). *Teaching against the grain: Texts for a pedagogy of possibility*. New York, NY: Bergin and Garvey.
- Slattery, P. (2003). Troubling the contours of arts-based educational research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 9(2), 192–197.
- Slattery, P. (2006). *Curriculum development in the post-modern era*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Smith, S. J. (2006). Gesture, landscape and embrace: A phenomenological analysis of elemental motions. *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology*, 6(1), 1–10.
- Smith, S. J. (2004). *The bearing of inquiry in teacher education: The S.F.U. experience*. Burnaby, Canada: SFU internal publication.
- Smith, S., & Lloyd, R. J. (2006). Promoting vitality in health and physical education. *Qualitative Health Research*, 16(2), 245–267.
- Snowber, C. (2002). Bodydance: Enfleshing soulful inquiry through improvisation. In C. Bagley & M. Cancienne (Eds.), *Dancing the data* (pp. 20–33). New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Snowber, C. (2004). Leaning absolutes: Honoring the detours in our lives. In D. Denton & W. Ashton (Eds.), *Spirituality, action & pedagogy: Teaching from the heart*. (pp. 124–135). New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Snowber, C. (2007). The soul moves: Dance and spirituality in educative practice. In L. Bresler (Ed.), *International handbook of research in arts education* (pp. 1449–1456). Dordrecht, NL: Springer.
- Snowber, C. (2009a). An aesthetics of everyday life. In S. Richmond & C. Snowber (Eds.), *Landscapes of aesthetic education* (pp. 65-77). Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Snowber, C. (2009b). The eros of listening: Dancing into presence. In S. Richmond & C. Snowber (Eds.), *Landscapes of aesthetic education* (pp. 30-41). Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Springgay, S. (2007). An ethics of embodiment. In S. Springgay, R. Irwin, C. Leggo, & P. Gouzouasis (Eds.), *Being with a/r/tography* (pp. 153–165). Rotterdam, NL: Sense.
- Springgay, S., & Freedman, D. (2010). Sleeping with cake and other touchable

- encounters: Performing a bodied curriculum. In E. Malewski (Ed.), *Curriculum studies handbook: The next moment*. (pp. 228–239). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Springgay, S., Irwin, R., & Kind, S. (2005). A/r/tography as living inquiry through art and text. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 11, 897–912.
- Stinson, S. (1995). Body of knowledge. *Educational Theory*, 45(1), 43-54.
- Stinson, S. (2002). What we teach is who we are: The stories of our lives. In L. Bresler & C. Thompson (Eds.). *The arts in children's lives: Context, culture, and curriculum* (pp. 169-183). Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer.
- Straehle, M., & Soucar, B. (2002). *Improvisation in counseling*. Poster session presented at the Annual Conference of the APA. Chicago, IL.
- Strozzi-Heckler, R. (1997). *The Anatomy of change: A way to move through life's transitions*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic.
- Suzuki, S. (1970). *Zen mind, beginner's mind*. New York, NY: Weatherhill.
- Taylor, C. (1991). *The malaise of modernity*. Concord, Canada: Anansi.
- Tokitsu, K. (2003). *Ki and the way of the martial arts*. Boston, MA: Shambhala.
- Tokitsu, K. (2012). *Building a martial arts method 1-10*. Retrieved from <http://www.tokitsu.es/index.php/en/articles-and-writings/kenji-tokitsus-essays>
- Trungpa, C. (2002/1973). *Cutting through spiritual materialism*. Boston, MA: Shambhala.
- Ueshiba, K. (1988). *The spirit of Aikido*. (T. Unno, Trans.). New York, NY: Kodansha USA.
- van Manen, M. (1986). Practicing phenomenological writing. *Phenomenology and Pedagogy*, 3(1), 37–69.
- van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. London, Canada: Althouse Press.
- Varela, F. (1999). *Ethical know-how: Action, wisdom and cognition*. Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Weiss, G. (1999). *Body image: Embodiment as intercorporeality*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Whyte, D. (2002). *The heart aroused: Poetry and the preservation of the soul in corporate America*. New York, NY: Doubleday.
- Williamson, A. (2009). Formative support and connection: Somatic movement dance education in community and client practice. *Journal of Dance and Somatic Practices*, 1(1), 29–45.

- Williamson, A. (2010). Reflections and theoretical approaches to the study of spiritualities within the field of somatic movement dance education. *Journal of Dance and Somatic Practices*, 2(1), 35–61.
- Willinsky, J. (2005). Just say know? Schooling in the knowledge society. *Educational Theory*, 55(1), 97–111.
- Wong, E. (1992). *Cultivating stillness: A Taoist manual for transforming body and mind*. Boston, MA: Shambhala.
- Yuasa, Y. (1987). In Kasulis T. P. (Ed.), *The body: Toward an Eastern mind-body theory*. (N. Shigenori & T. P. Kasulis, Trans.). Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Zajonc, A. (2006). Love and knowledge: Recovering the heart of learning through contemplation. *Teachers College Record*, 108(9), 1742–1759.
- Zajonc, A. (2009). *Meditation as contemplative inquiry: When knowing becomes love*. Great Barrington, MA: Lindisfarne Books.
- Zarrilli, P. (1998). *When the body becomes all eyes: Paradigms, discourses and practices of power in kalaripayattu, a South Indian martial art*. New Delhi, India: Oxford University Press.
- Zarrilli, P. (2009). *Psychophysical Acting: An intercultural approach after Stanislavski*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Appendix.

Standing Gongs

The following is a guide to standing correctly and how the mind should perceive the exercise. There are severe limitations to offering such a guide and it is alone insufficient to practice effectively. I encourage you to try out this practice, but if you are interested in developing in it, finding a skilled teacher who can give you hands-on feedback and adjustments to your structure is critical. I offer this guide to give a flavour of the complexity involved in the practice.

- breathing in and out through the nose is long, even, deep, slow, smooth and natural - the mouth is closed and the tongue touches the roof of the palette to support engaging the perineum and lower abdomen in breathing
- the lower, middle and upper *dantiens* (lower, middle and upper torso) feel expanded in all directions as if sitting on the ground
- relax the shoulders, relax the lower back, lift the back of the head slightly with the chin slightly tucked and “listening behind”⁵⁹
- shoulders arms and hands dropped and relaxed but not limp, arms held slightly away from the body
- the palm and fingers are relaxed and open
- stand with knees slightly bent flat footed with the weight resting close to the ball of the foot, lower back relaxed
- eyes open and unblinking, softly gazing forward toward the horizon
- stand with equal pressure on both feet initially, and in more advanced practice, altering the weight from one foot to the other (the heel is rooted and the pressure is centered just above the sole of the foot on the bubbling well point (K-1 point in acupuncture))
- imagine a flat surface closely surrounding your body not quite touching, with minimum effort attempt to expand your entire body to touch and lightly press against the flat surfaces⁶⁰.

59 Relaxing and opening the back from the perineum to the top of the head increases sensitivity the environment behind the body

60 There are many ways of imagining here. Sometimes it helps to imagine the body as being filled with “heavy water”. I find a resonance with the image of being lightly massaged by hands simultaneously from head to toe. The idea is to create a reality of the body being both fully activated and expanded at all points while remaining as relaxed as possible. The contradiction created here is what is responsible for generating a feeling of buoyancy through the body, a fullness referred to as peng. Through the imagination, it is possible to generate weight through intention as the action of our mind:

creates effective tensions in the muscles, which are activated to the extent that they contract depending on the situations being imagined. The greater the imaginary burden or weight, the more the muscles are activated in response to the imagined situation. In this

- attention moves through the body and muscle tension is released wherever it is found
- connect into a feeling of your innermost being, sense of self and expand it out to the edges of the body in all directions

way, the muscles are strengthened by a kind of self-burdening. Such burdens have no material existence since they are the product of your intentional thought, where the possibilities are innumerable. (Tokitsu, 2012)