Section one: Contexts

Chapter one – Introduction

Overview

This document is the culmination of ten years of post-compulsory education plus the social, cultural, vocational, educational and spiritual experiences of my life. It represents my current thinking about the concepts of and synergies between community, adult learning, meaningful work and sustainability, and it draws on a broad base of trans-disciplinary, trans-cultural and trans-temporal literature. It was prompted by the observable marginalisation of individuals, communities, cultures and the environment by the Western worldview; and by the concept that there is inherent wisdom, insight and praxis within other ontological and epistemological traditions that might be utilised to reverse this marginalisation.

The purpose of this document is to investigate a harmonious ontology which could facilitate the conditions for holistic, transformative epistemologies within the structures of a community, with a view to creating a sustainable future for all beings.

To that end, this document:

- documents my personal journey in search of wholeness and meaning,
- describes a mode of inquiry based on an emergent and iterative synthesis of meta-narratives, self-reflection, reflective praxis and collaborative conversation,
- explores the interconnected nature of the universe and the roles and responsibilities that the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of Holism, Indigenous cultures and Eastern ontologies appear to ascribe to humanity within that interconnected universe,
- describes the common themes that may be discernable between the meta-narratives of Holism, Indigenous cultures and Eastern ontologies,
- explores the potential relationship between these common themes, perennial philosophy and the visible forms of a culture's cosmology,
- describes the archetypes and the structures that synthesise the identified roles and responsibilities,
- explores the role that holistic, transformative epistemologies may have within the ontological and epistemological traditions and in the creation of the potential

archetypes and structures noted above, which together form what is described as a harmonious ontology,

- describes how a harmonious ontology such as has been identified has the potential to facilitate a sustainable future for all beings,

- provides a reflection on the emergent and iterative process that I engaged in during the process of conceptualising and writing this document in order to articulate my new understanding of the concepts of community, adult learning, meaningful work and sustainability and the apparent relationship between these concepts and a harmonious ontology, and

- describes the opportunities for further research in the areas of community, adult learning, meaningful work and sustainability and their role in creating a sustainable future for humanity using the concept of a harmonious ontology as a guide.

Contexts

Central to the investigation which led to this document is the acceptance that any individual exists within multiple contexts simultaneously, and that these contexts are nested together in a non-relativistic hierarchy that Koestler (1967) termed a holarchy. I will discuss the concept of the holarchy in detail in Chapters two and four, however, at a basic level a contextual holarchy could look like this:

• Meta-context:	• The solar system (though contexts exist beyond this level including the Milky Way galaxy, the known universe and beyond)
• Macro-context:	• The Earth
• Meso-context:	• Every individual exists within multiple contexts simultaneously, (contexts at this level include, but are not limited to, region, country, society, community, family, ethnicity, language group, social cohort, economic cohort, profession, interests, skill sets, physical location, weather patterns and personal, communal and societal histories)
• Micro-context:	• Individual

Figure 1.1: An example of a contextual holarchy.

This brief representation indicates that, depending on the circumstances, a range of contexts impact on every individual in any given moment. Each of these contexts is both a holon (a unique whole) and a holarchy (a non-relativistic hierarchy). However, life is very much more complicated than this representation indicates and every relationship,

interaction and experience that a person has involves a great many contextual stimuli all of which affect that person's perception of that relationship, interaction, or experience. Equally there is no way currently for humanity to know how far this contextual holarchy extends or exactly what it encompasses, since human beings have no idea what entities, relationships, experiences and phenomena exist within the known universe, what is beyond the known universe, what occurred before the known universe came into existence as they know it and how any of those contexts impacts on or otherwise influences their daily lives (Hollick, 2007; Laszlo, 2006d; Laszlo & Currivan, 2008; Tarnas, 2006). Similarly on an individual level a person cannot know all the historical and cultural contexts that are impacting on them in any given moment, since these contexts may have their roots in events that occurred decades or even centuries earlier.

Methodology

Throughout the document I sought to identify sources of wisdom, insight and praxis which may assist humanity to create a vision for its future which is sustainable, not only for humanity itself, but also for the immediate holarchy or macro-context it exists within: that is the Earth. In order to do this I utilised an inductive, emergent and iterative process as the core of my research methodology and "develop[ed a] qualitative narrative [that] shows that the process [was] one of emerging design" (Creswell, 1998, pp. 77).

Qualitative research, even that which utilises multiple methodologies as this investigation did, tends to be research *on* people, research *about* people, or possibly research *for* people rather than research that is truly undertaken *with* people (Heron, 1996). The typical approaches to research, as well as the language used within it, tend to force a mutually exclusive separation between the researcher, the research and the subject (Heron, 1996). In framing this investigation I intuitively sought to minimise this mutual exclusivity by initially grounding it in my own social, cultural, vocational, educational and spiritual experiences and crystallising it through collaborative conversations. However, given the broad scope of the investigation, undertaking a 'full-form co-operative inquiry' seemed out of the question since this would require the full and continuous participation of all those involved "moving in cyclic fashion between phases of reflection as co-researchers and of action as co-subjects" (Heron, 1996, p. 21). Instead I split the investigation into three distinct phases, utilising different and varied methodologies in each phase.

In the first phase I began by framing this investigation through describing the assumptions, understandings and working theories that had emerged from the aforementioned social, cultural, vocational, educational and spiritual experiences of my life. Though this approach may not be considered to be particularly normal, even in qualitative research circles, I believe it was the only one I could adopt with any integrity for two reasons. First, because I aimed to generate a new synthesis of ideas which I would use to achieve the purpose of this investigation outlined earlier which I do not believe has been fully articulated elsewhere. This investigation is a new and original work which is rooted in my own self-direction, my own "universe of meaning" (Barron, 1995, p. 75) and as such, it would be incongruous to utilise a pre-determined interpretive model (Heron, 1996) to analyse the data and frame the results. Second, because, as Parker Palmer notes, "…the story of my journey is no more or less important than anyone else's. It is simply the best source of data I have on a subject where generalisations often fail but truth may be found in the details" (2000, p. 19). The journey which this document represents is one where holistic and transformative epistemologies, vocation and self-actualisation all feature but where they have, as yet, failed to come together in the perfect synthesis of balance and harmony, of true self, of simply *Being*. Rumi said "If we are unfaithful to true self, we will extract a price from others. We will make promises we cannot keep, build houses from flimsy stuff, conjure dreams that devolve into nightmares and other people will suffer…" (1989, p. 56). This document is an attempt to balance holistic and transformative epistemologies, vocation and self-actualisation in order to be faithful to my true self.

The second phase consisted of an exploration of the meta-narratives of Holism, Indigenous cultures and Eastern ontologies through *immersion* in an extensive body of literature, other cultural experiences and texts (the use of the word 'texts' throughout this document should be understood to include written, oral and visual sources). I have provided an explanation of why these meta-narratives were chosen in Chapter two and an analysis of this approach in Chapters six and eight. This choice was also prompted by the social, cultural, vocational, educational and spiritual experiences of my life, rather than because of any perceived hierarchy of epistemological and ontological approaches, or because of any trend in transpersonal study or person-centred inquiry (Heron, 1998) toward what are commonly referred to as the wisdom traditions (for example see Wilber, 2000a).

I have provided a detailed explanation of my use of the terms 'Indigenous' and 'Eastern' in Chapters four and five respectively. The purpose of this immersion in texts was to distil wisdom, insight and praxis from a seemingly diverse set of what I describe as meta-narratives (for the sake of brevity) in order to determine the common themes within and between those meta-narratives. I describe these common themes as eight orientations (for explanatory purposes) and refer to them throughout this document. Following immersion in the texts and the identification of possible common themes I returned to the texts to find specific evidence of these common themes within each area of study. It is this information that I used in the final literature review that comprises Chapters three, four and five.

Following immersion in the texts I engaged in significant deep reflection on the evidence of the common themes or orientations that I had identified during the process and formed a number of understandings, assumptions and working theories about those common themes. These included how the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of each meta-narrative frame the interconnected universe and the roles and responsibilities of humanity within that interconnected universe. I then explored the relationship between the common themes I had identified and the concept of *Perennial Philosophy*. I felt it necessary to explore perennial philosophy for two reasons. First, because it has been widely discussed in terms of being *the* universal, inclusive spiritual truth that is common across spiritual and religious traditions (Gallegos Nava, 2001; Hollick, 2007; Huxley, 1945; Miller, 1996; Nakagawa, 2000; Skolimowski, 1994; Wilber, 1982a). Second, because it could be seen as reflecting my aim to explore the interconnected nature of the universe and the roles and responsibilities that the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of the meta-narratives appear to ascribe to humanity within that interconnected universe. Finally, this phase included a reframing of the common themes I had previously identified as being the visible forms of a culture's cosmology rather than of being *the only* universal, inclusive spiritual truth that is common across spiritual and religious traditions as is indicated by perennial philosophy.

The third phase of the investigation subjected the understandings, assumptions and working theories I had developed to some scrutiny. In order to do this I used the crystallisation tool, previously known as triangulation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) of interviews to explore my interpretation of what had emerged. However, in order to retain

the collaborative (Heron, 1996) and participatory (Skolimowski, 1994) nature of my investigation, I reconceptualised the interviews as *collaborative conversations* in which leading writers, thinkers and practitioners in areas of relevance to this investigation explored these understandings, assumptions and working theories with me. This reconceptualisation encompassed the understanding that no "person can set themselves up as an external authority who defines the nature of internal authority for other people" (Heron, 1996, p. 50). That is, I did not undertake the collaborative conversation process in order to gain consensus from the aforementioned writers, thinkers and practitioners for the understandings, assumptions and working theories I had developed, which would infer an epistemological and ontological hierarchy, but rather to build a deeper understanding through the act and experience of collaborative conversation.

I have described the conversation process in detail in Chapter seven and utilised extracts from the conversation transcripts throughout the document. For clarity I have identified these extracts as specifically originating in the collaborative conversation process rather than simply being other forms of personal communication or discussion. These collaborative conversations are examples of holistic inquiry since they were "grounded in [the]…participative knowing [and] interplay within the co-inquirers…thought[s] and experience[s]" (Heron, 1996, p. 16). They involved constant self- and peer-reflection both in regard to the evolving understandings, assumptions and working theories as well as the outcomes of each specific conversation. This further immersion and reflection allowed me to clarify, refine and deepen my understandings, assumptions and working theories with regard to the purpose of this document.

The first three phases of this investigation enabled me to explore the interconnected nature of the universe and the roles and responsibilities that the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of the meta-narratives appear to ascribe to humanity within that interconnected universe. They also allowed me to describe the common themes that can be discerned between these meta-narratives, to explore the potential relationship between those common themes and perennial philosophy, and explore these common themes as the visible forms of a culture's cosmology. From this I described both the archetypes and structures that may synthesise those roles and responsibilities, and explored the role that holistic, transformative epistemologies may have within those ontological and epistemological traditions and in relation to those potential archetypes and structures.

Together, these archetypes and structures and roles and responsibilities form what I described as a *Harmonious Ontology*. Finally, I described how a harmonious ontology such as had been identified could have the potential to facilitate a sustainable future for all beings. These understandings enabled an evolution in my thinking about the concepts of and synergies between, community, adult learning, meaningful work and sustainability.

I will now discuss the structure of this document in more detail.

Structure of this document

This document was written in four sections. The sections build on each other and the content is grounded in a diverse body of trans-disciplinary, trans-cultural and trans-temporal literature, wisdom, insight and praxis, meta-narrative inquiry, collaborative conversations, reflective praxis, and emergent holistic, transformative epistemologies. Because of this layering and complexity the development of this document was iterative as my understanding became fuller and my insight deepened.

Section one consists of two chapters. Chapter one sets out the purpose of this document, the methodology employed and the structure of the document. The remainder of this chapter briefly discusses the concept of worldview. It discusses the Western worldview, the mythologies that support this worldview and the archetypes which emerge from it, in order to set the context from within which the document was written.

Chapter two is an autobiography that forms a longitudinal case study of my social, cultural, vocational, educational and spiritual experiences grounded in terms of an ongoing epistemologically transformative experience, a search for meaning and an introduction to wholeness. Autobiography is a well-recognised, though not common, approach in qualitative research (Creswell, 1998). It is used to contextualise my investigation by setting the tone for the meta-narrative inquiry, collaborative conversation, reflective praxis and iterative approach I used throughout. My life has allowed me to see that the problems of marginalisation can impact on people from all strata of society and all societies. This chapter outlines the "life course stages and experiences", the "stories" of my encounters, the "epiphanies" I have experienced and provides a "historical context" of educational practice (adapted from Creswell, 1998, pp. 47-51) as I experienced it. This chapter also briefly explores the concept of transformation and the field of *Transformative Learning*, since it is a theme which reoccurs throughout the document.

Section two includes four chapters. Chapters three, four and five comprise an extensive literature review of the meta-narratives of Holism, Indigenous cultures and Eastern ontologies. The sources for this literature review were books, book chapters, journal articles and essays. In the case of Holism, I used texts written by leading writers, thinkers and practitioners in related fields. In the case of Indigenous cultures I used texts written by Indigenous people themselves as much as possible, where this was not possible I used texts written by those who are well-respected by the Indigenous community. In the case of Eastern ontologies I used a combination of modern translations of original texts, including sometimes using multiple translations of the same text and modern texts written by leading writers, thinkers and practitioners in the field.

Chapter six discusses the potential limitations of the approach undertaken in the literature review, whilst indicating why it was still an appropriate starting point. It highlights the common themes that were identified and provides an interpretation of the interconnected universe and the roles and responsibilities that the meta-narratives of Holism, Indigenous cultures and Eastern ontologies appear to ascribe to humanity within that interconnected universe as they can be discerned from the literature review. This chapter then discusses the concept of *Perennial Philosophy* and its limitations. It then explores the concept of *Cosmology* in relation to perennial philosophy. Finally, it explains how the common themes that I previously identified would be more appropriate to be discussed as the visible forms of a culture's cosmology rather than as being *the* single universal, inclusive spiritual truth that is common across spiritual, cultural and religious traditions – that is, as perennial philosophy.

Section three comprises three chapters. Chapter seven details the process of engaging in collaborative conversation with leading writers, thinkers and practitioners in the areas of Holism, Indigenous cultures, Eastern ontologies, community development, adult and community education, transformative learning, sustainability, spirituality, personal transformation and vocational education and training. These areas were chosen as a result of the underpinning work I completed as part of my undergraduate and previous postgraduate study.

Chapter eight explores the new or clarified understandings, assumptions and working theories which I derived from the collaborative conversation process.

Chapter nine reviews these new and clarified understandings, assumptions and working theories. It describes the archetypes and structures that may synthesise the roles and responsibilities that the meta-narratives explored appear to ascribe to humanity. It explores the role that holistic, transformative epistemologies could have in relation to those potential archetypes and structures. Finally, it describes how a *Harmonious Ontology* could have the potential to facilitate a sustainable future for all beings.

Section four comprises only one chapter, Chapter ten, which provides a reflection on the emergent and iterative process that I engaged in during the process of conceptualising and undertaking this investigation, in order to articulate my emergent understanding of the concepts of *Community*, *Adult Learning*, *Meaningful Work* and *Sustainability.* It also describes the relationship between these concepts and the harmonious ontology explored in Chapter nine. Finally, it provides an overview of the opportunities for further investigation in these areas and their role in creating a sustainable future for humanity using the concept of a harmonious ontology as a guide.

Worldviews

Originally a German word (Weltanschauung) meaning the "world looked at" (Wilshire, 2006, p. 261), the concept of a worldview is rooted in European or Western culture and thinking. As such, it cannot necessarily be adequately applied to cultures and thinking from outside that context. Worldviews are human constructs. They are the systems of beliefs (Sluga & Stern, 1996) or understandings that humanity uses to make sense of its existence. From them flow the structures of societies, and from them flow the patterns of behaviour, the norms and the mores that shape humanity's interactions with the entire complex context it exists within. For it is the worldview which describes that context, how it was formed and how it evolves, what is important and what is not, what is real and what is not, and the extent of that context and how events, entities, relationships, experiences and phenomena, both internal and external to that context, are to be understood and interacted with. "Our worldview is not simply the way we look at the world. It reaches inward to constitute our innermost being and outward to constitute the world. …Worldviews create worlds" (Tarnas, 2006, p. 16).

There have been many attempts to categorise worldviews, often utilising a developmental model. Use of such a model suggests that worldviews that were evidenced in the past (that

is prior to the person writing) or that are observable from the outside (that is outside the worldview that person writing inhabits) are of a lesser stage of development than the writer's own (Wilber, 2000a), a trend that can often be seen in discussion of the worldviews of Indigenous peoples and other non-Western cultures. This developmental view of worldviews introduces a hierarchical, comparative and competitive element which originates in the Western worldview. This tendency to view worldviews hierarchically leads to the exclusion of wisdom, insight and praxis which emerge from outside the Western worldview.

In this work I use the terms 'dominant' and 'Western' interchangeably to describe the mechanised, technologised and industrialised worldview of the 'first' world, what is sometimes called the West or more recently the North (Ife, 2002).

Western worldview

Worldviews are not static they are constantly in flux. They are constantly evolving and adapting to their context. However, within this adaptation is a tension that keeps a balance between the current worldview and the influences originating from outside that worldview. This tension has conservative tendencies, thus maintaining just enough of the status quo to allow for appropriate evolution ensuring longevity without facilitating obsolescence. The evolution of the modern Western worldview is said to have begun just over five hundred years ago with the work of Copernicus and Galileo and continued through the work of Newton, Descartes, Bacon and Darwin (Hawking, 2002; Hollick, 2007; Kuhn, 1957; Sloan, 1983; Tarnas, 1991, 2006). Each new evolution of this worldview did four things. First, the pre-eminence of humanity over other life (animate and non-animate) was established and later reinforced (O'Sullivan, 1999). Second, the mechanistic metaphor for the context within which humanity existed was introduced (Hawking, 2002; Hollick, 2007; Tarnas, 1991, 2006). Third, this emergent context was established as the dominant worldview (Hollick, 2007; Oliver & Gershman, 1989; Tarnas, 1991, 2006). Fourth, those fortunate to exist within this dominant worldview were seen as having the right to dominate and exploit those outside it, including other animate and seemingly non-animate life (O'Sullivan, 1999). Each evolution or iteration of this worldview diminished humanity's capacity to think holistically, to experience in terms of multiple contexts and to imagine in terms of non-linear time (Oliver, Canniff, & Korhonen, 2002; Oliver & Gershman, 1989). As a consequence, human potential and the place of humanity

in the universe was and is, viewed in a mechanistic or technological manner (Hollick, 2007; Oliver et al., 2002; Sloan, 1983; Tarnas, 1991, 2006).

> The heart of the problem...lies not in science and technology but in the distorted images of the world that have come to supply the context within which they are pursued and employed. And these deficient images of the world themselves spring from limited and fragmenting ways of thinking that have lost touch with the fullness of both reason and reality. (Sloan, 1983, p. 25)

Mythology and archetypes

The evolution of the Western worldview to its current state was fairly rapid and was catalysed by the ongoing development of seemingly incontrovertible scientific knowledge which provided dual metaphors to represent the emergent worldview. These metaphors viewed the universe as machine and humankind (actually man-kind) as superior to all other forms of life. These metaphors can even be observed today though perhaps with some finessing for modern sensibilities (Hollick, 2007; Oliver et al., 2002; Oliver & Gershman, 1989; Sloan, 1983; Tarnas, 1991, 2006). Intrinsic in these metaphors and therefore the worldview itself, is the mythology of the modern human (actually 'man' again, until very recently). This mythology is the story of how 'man' was simultaneously able to understand all the mysteries of life, and conquer and thence master, all 'he' beheld. This is the mythology of the noble hero (Tarnas, 1991, 2006). A mythology which has included the so-called 'discovering' of new worlds and the 'civilising' of some Indigenous peoples whilst 'saving' others from themselves. It has also included the 'conquering' of high mountains, the 'exploration' and 'taming' of previously un-navigated rivers, forests and deserts and even space (Tarnas, 2006) and the 'harnessing' and 'exploitation' of other natural phenomena. Whilst it has encouraged tremendous innovation in health and technology (Sloan, 1983; Tarnas, 1991), it has also encouraged religion-based 'crusades' against the 'infidels' in ancient history, and cold and hot wars to 'protect' those within this worldview against the 'enemy' outside it in more modern times. The hero mythology has also given humanity the 'war' on drugs, 'war' on poverty, the 'war' on terror and the 'bear' and 'bull' economic markets just to name a few examples.

This worldview is based on the idea that the people of the West can do anything they put their mind to, that there is a scientific or technological solution to all the challenges that face them (Chargaff, 1977; Sloan, 1983), that they will be battling against the odds, that God ('God' in this case being the God of Christian tradition) is on their side, and that from

experience they know that eventually they will prevail and their system of beliefs (their worldview) will rise like a phoenix from the ashes, stronger than before (Tarnas, 1991, 2006). In fairness to those who exist within the Western worldview this mythology is based on centuries of empirical evidence. However, such evidence is unbalanced and there is an increasing body of literature that describes this type of existence as spiritually deficit (Hollick, 2007; Oliver & Gershman, 1989; O'Sullivan, 1999; Tarnas, 2006), suggesting that it makes people become self-encapsulated (O'Sullivan, 1999) and insular, which shapes and adversely affects their habits of thought and judgement, the way they make choices and set goals and the way they interact both with others and with their entire context (Bopp & Bopp, 2001). If this is true then Western society appears to show a pattern of self-destructive behaviour (Laszlo, 2008b; Laszlo, Grof, & Russell, 2003; O'Sullivan, 1999).

> History suggests that humans tend to construct increasingly complex technological and social organisational systems which Finally, get "out of control"...as humans we have the capacity to organise vast numbers of people and develop technologies to extend our powers almost beyond our imaginations, yet when we transcend the boundaries of simple face-to-face societies in very substantial ways, we seem unable to limit the excesses and abuses of this technical power. (Oliver et al., 2002, p. 25)

This behaviour is manifested in:

- destruction of the planet's ecological systems, natural disasters, floods, famine, melting ice caps, salinity, loss of top soil, fire, tsunami, drought, resource depletion (including fossil fuels and water) and a reluctance to adopt responsible and sustainable energy sources,
- unsustainable population growth and the inability to support the elderly and infirm, and the denial of cheap drugs by the Western industries and governments for 'Others',
- pandemics and diseases for which there is no known cure with pharmaceutical companies and governments refusing to provide cheap drugs,
- genetic modification of seeds which will not propagate, which forces farmers to buy new supplies each year,
- genocide, terrorism, nuclear proliferation, landmines, civil war, insurgency, revolution, torture, rendition, coercion and riots,

- exploitation of workers to fulfil the needs of the consumerist society and encouragement of, and failure to reduce, crippling debt for both individuals and countries, and economic disparity (a widening gap between the haves and have nots),

- migration of toxic industries to developing countries and corporate greed and iniquitous employment practices,

- inadequate social services, onerous bureaucracy and increasing encroachment into the privacy and civil liberties of the people by governments,

- the lack of political will by people and short-term and narrow-focussed politicking by politicians of all levels of government and all persuasions,

- homogenisation, corporatisation and packaging of 'news', 'spin' and advertising together, and

- breakdown of society, community and family and the continual renewal of self-destructive behaviour and relationships leading to apathy, crime, violence, drug alcohol and other substance abuse, child abuse and people trafficking (adapted from Clark Jr, 1997; Laszlo, 2006b; Laszlo & Currivan, 2008; World Wildlife Fund, 2006).

This catalogue of societal and environmental breakdown is only possible because of the complete integration of the structures, attitudes, values, norms and mores of Western society with the worldview that created them. This integration, as discussed in Chapter eight, paradoxically allows seemingly moral and responsible people to work and participate in organisations and structures which display the characteristics of a psychopath (conversation with Goodman, 2006). It also facilitates the marginalisation and destruction of both the environment and the 'Other' within and outside the Western worldview through the imposition of artificial hierarchies based on the relative worth of people, possessions, experiences, knowledge and cultures in comparison to those nurtured by the Western worldview (Hollick, 2007; Oliver et al., 2002; O'Sullivan, 1999; Tarnas, 2006). However, there is also a view that this societal and environmental breakdown might be the precursor to a species-wide evolution of consciousness of epochal proportions although it is much to early to say whether this will indeed occur (Henderson & Ikeda, 2004; Laszlo, 2008b; Laszlo & Currivan, 2008; Laszlo et al., 2003; Tarnas, 1991).

The mythologies inherent in the Western worldview include perceptions of success and inclusion that are so entrenched and pervasive that even those people who do not support the assumptions contained within those mythologies feel the need to comply with them

simply to have a chance of a decent life, a pattern which is clearly discernable in many Indigenous communities and across developing and emerging nations. Unfortunately this pattern of behaviour brings with it a certain inevitability that is much like watching a car wreck on an icy or wet road. The participants, oblivious to the danger until the last moments, are helpless to do anything about their impending demise since each correction they make, using their technological and mechanised worldview as the frame of reference; either has little or no effect, or causes their situation to worsen. It appears that the Western worldview, and the mythologies and archetypes associated with it, are progressively fracturing and disenchanting Western society and, by association, global society (Oliver et al., 2002; O'Sullivan, 1999). The key archetype in the mythology that supports the Western worldview, far from being the hero, the protector, or the saviour is something much more sinister and apocalyptic. This archetype exists because the people who have revered the hero mythology (and the societal structures which have reinforced it) have been actively regenerating the Western worldview for generations, activity which has ultimately brought the world to the situation it now faces (Oliver & Gershman, 1989; O'Sullivan, 1999; Tarnas, 2006).

Summary

This chapter has set out the purpose of this document, the methodology employed and the structure of the document. It briefly discussed the concept of worldview and the Western worldview in particular. It highlighted the mythologies that support this worldview and the archetypes which emerge from it in order to set the context from within which the document was written. The following chapter will narrow the context of this document further by grounding it in the "direct, lived, being-in-the-world" knowledge (Heron, 1996, p. 33) which originated in the social, cultural, vocational, educational and spiritual experiences of my life. These experiences act to 'validate' that knowledge through the interdependence of systemic logic where the:

> …systemic whole is an interdependent up-hierarchy, a dynamic process in which what is below supports, grounds and empowers what is above. Experiential knowing…supports …pattern knowing, which supports conceptual knowing, which upholds practical knowing…At the same time what is above consummates and celebrates a new level of relative autonomy what is below. (Heron, 1996, p. 33)

Thus validation of the knowledge articulated in this document occurs through the dynamic equilibrium (Laszlo, 2006d) or the universal tension "between freedom and control,

creativity and determinism" (Hollick, 2007, p. 88) that is inherent in a complex system such as is demonstrated by the ontological, epistemological, rhetorical, axiological and methodological holarchy that *Being*, *Experiencing* and *Knowing* in the world creates.

Chapter two – My story

Overview

The previous chapter introduced this document and provided an introduction to the context within which it was written. However, the initial impetus for this investigation was very personal and therefore, in order to truly situate this work in that context, I needed to describe the social, cultural, vocational, educational and spiritual experiences of my life since it was they that initially prompted my postgraduate study and because "propositions about human experience that are the outcome of…research are of questionable validity if they are not grounded in the researchers' experience" (Heron, 1996, p. 20).

This is my story. It is the story of an ongoing transformation of my epistemological, ontological, axiological, rhetorical and methodological understandings and my introduction to wholeness. It has been presented in this chapter as a "longitudinal case study" (Borg & Gall, 1989, p. 37) as an autobiography. It "describe[s] the turning points of my [educational and vocational] life" (Denzin, 1989, p. 69) and it describes "spaces of marginalisation and spaces of hope" (Smith, 2001, p. 4). I chose to use this story, not in order to set out to prove a point in an academic manner – multiple case studies are required for that (Yin, 1989), but merely to situate the reader in a real, first-person narrative and in an immersive, iterative and reflective experience. This chapter also shows, through the epistemologically transformative experiences described how I became aware of the wholeness or oneness of the universe, which is also variously described as the interconnected, holographic (Bohm, 1980; Talbot, 1991; Wilber, 1982b), or holarchical (Koestler, 1967) universe.

Transformation and Transformative Learning

The theme that runs through this document is that of transformation and transformative learning, or rather transformative epistemology. In this document transformation is understood to mean a *permanent shift of consciousness*, this can refer to both individual and collective consciousness. Transformative epistemologies are understood to be epistemologies which *facilitate that shift in consciousness*. Since this chapter is autobiographical I have described certain key moments in my life as transformational. Some of these moments have been dramatic, sudden and epiphanal, whilst others have

been drawn out, incremental and evolutionary. However, not only have they *all* been transformational, but they were *all* epistemologically significant.

In this document formal transformative learning is understood to be transformative learning that is recognised by the academy and is facilitated through formal learning experiences. Informal transformative learning on the other hand is the learning that facilitates a shift, or transformation, of consciousness through informal learning, through formal learning experiences outside the academy, or through life experiences. It is this which I tend to refer to as *transformational epistemology*.

It is possible to define a number of different versions, strands or approaches to formal transformative learning from the literature. According to Dirkx (2005), version one is the radical or revolutionary pedagogy of Freire (1993), hooks (1994) and Abalos (1996). Version two is the work focussing on the formal adult and workplace learning of Mezirow and associates (1990) and Cranton (1994). Version three includes the concepts of education for the soul and education for the evolution of consciousness which some writers, thinkers and practitioners believe are inherent in some Indigenous and Eastern cultures and in some Western contemplative and transpersonal traditions. This version is exemplified by the work of Miller (2000), Ferrer (2000, 2002) and Hart (2001). Finally, version four includes the transdisciplinary work of the Transformative Learning Centre at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto (O'Sullivan, 1999; O'Sullivan, Morrell, & O'Connor, 2002; 2004) and the work of Kanzanjian and Laurence (2002). Delineating the field of transformative learning this way paradoxically adds both confusion and clarity. Confusion because on the surface this broad grouping of writers, thinkers and practitioners do not necessarily appear to be addressing the same aspects of humanity's context, or indeed of transformative learning itself; and clarity because whilst these versions may not appear to directly relate to each other, within each version the writers, thinkers and practitioners tend to generally build on each other's work and the general thrust may be considered to be broadly complementary (conversation with Dirkx, 2005). However, it should be noted that some of these versions fall into the same trap that formal Western education has, that is, they are focussed on the individual within a narrow situational framework (context), thus potentially limiting the transformation that can occur or that is acknowledged (conversations with Goodman, 2006; O'Sullivan, 2006),

and therefore do not equate to my interpretation of transformative epistemology noted above.

Formal transformative learning then, is not a well-defined or homogenous field (Schugurensky, 2002). This lack of clarity can still be seen as a strength however, since, for many in the academy, transformative learning is predicated on questioning the status quo (Schugurensky, 2002) and it requires any writer, thinker, or practitioner to continually define and redefine what transformative learning means to them (conversations with Goodman, 2006; O'Sullivan, 2006). Generally, formal transformative learning is assumed to be a critical pedagogy, that is, critical of the Western worldview and the educational structures that support it. It can also be assumed that formal transformative learning is seeking to transform the lives and experience of those it encounters with a view to affecting a wider and sustainable transformation at a societal or global level. However, there are also those who question the appropriateness of this aim as it infers that transformation can and should be imposed from outside the individual or community (conversations with Crowell, 2007; Miller, 2006b). Such questions suggest that some formal approaches to transformative learning are simply replacing one educational system rooted in a certain worldview with another, albeit different, form of authoritative hierarchy (Heron, 1998).

Despite the broad and sometimes contradictory nature of the field of formal transformative learning, I have chosen to highlight epistemologically transformative experiences throughout this document because they foster epistemological and ontological change through the continual examination of values, beliefs, ideas and practices within a greater holistic framework or context. Tobin Hart says transformation is "to go beyond current form. This means growth, creation and evolution, an expansion of consciousness" (2001, p. 149). Despite its epiphanal appearance, my investigation has shown that transformation does not happen instantly and it is never finished. Transformation is iterative and continuous. It is "both an outcome and a process; it is the push and the pulse that drives self-organisation and self-transcendence" (Hart, 2001, p. 149). Transformation only occurs as a result of deep encounters (O'Sullivan, 2005) with the ultimate wisdom, insight and praxis contained in the universe (Skolimowski, 1994). These deep encounters, like transformation itself, are sensual and experiential, they touch a person's soul and they

reconnect the person to the meta-context of the holarchical and holographic universe. At an individual and societal level this means:

> …transformation is a movement toward increasing wholeness that simultaneously pushes toward diversity and uniqueness, becoming more uniquely who we are and toward unity…in this way, self-actualisation and self-transcendence do not contradict each other…[Transformation] emphasise[s] liberation, fluidity and flexibility, movement and freshness, destruction and creation. (Hart, 2001, p. 50)

As such, transformation is an "inherently spiritual endeavour" (Hart, 2001, p. 171) because it involves creation and community and individuals and relationships – the fundamental impulses of life.

The Transformative Learning Centre at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto describes transformative learning as:

> …experiencing a deep structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings and actions. It is a *shift of consciousness* that dramatically and permanently alters our *way of being in the world*. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our relationships with other humans and with the natural world; our understandings of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race and gender; our body-awarenesses, our visions for alternative approaches to living; and our sense of possibilities for social justice and peace and personal joy [my emphasis]. (O'Sullivan, 2005, p. 76)

I find this description much more subtle than that which can be found in some versions of formal transformative learning, since it describes informal transformative learning as I understand it (and described it earlier) without any of the prescriptive aspects which can be indicative of formal transformative learning. The experiences described hereafter began a *shift of consciousness* in me and began to change my *way of being in the world*, and therefore they can be called transformational. The distinction between formal transformative learning and informal transformative learning, which I articulated earlier as transformative epistemology is not mere semantics, but is a deep epistemological understanding. Therefore from hereon in, my use of the term transformative learning will only refer to that which I have described as formal transformative learning, that is, transformational learning undertaken in and recognised by the academy.

Wholeness or oneness?

This chapter describes the social, cultural, vocational, educational and spiritual experiences of my life in terms of an ongoing epistemologically transformative experience, a search for

meaning and an introduction to wholeness. In this document I refer to both wholeness and oneness with the same understanding although it should be noted that not all writers, thinkers and practitioners concur with this thinking (discussion with Hart & Crowell, 2007). However, to avoid unhelpful semantic distractions, in this document my understanding of both wholeness and oneness is considered to be the wholeness/oneness of the Self (mind, body and soul), the wholeness/oneness in/of community and the wholeness/oneness in/of the universe. This understanding acknowledges that such wholeness/oneness comprises "unity in consciousness" (Krippner & Conti, 2006, p. 95), "unity in diversity" (conversation with Cajete, 2006) and the "great community of life" (van Lippe-Biesterfeld, 2006, p. 164). It acknowledges that everything in and beyond the known universe, including so-called pure, cosmic, collective or shared consciousness (Bache, 2008; Laszlo, 2007, 2006d; Laszlo & Currivan, 2008; Laszlo et al., 2003; McTaggart, 2008a; Talbot, 1991), are holons and holarchies in the meta-holarchy of the universe. It also acknowledges the concept of the universe as being holographic (Bohm, 1980; Talbot, 1991; Wilber, 1982b), an acknowledgement which, on the surface, appears to indicate at least the *possibility* of a shared, or universal, or collective, or perennial consciousness or philosophy. This is a concept which has been acknowledged for millennia as evidenced by the metaphor of Buddhist Sutra of *Indra's Net* found in the Buddhist *Avatamsaka* (*Flower Garland* or *Flower Ornament*) *Sutra* (Cleary, 1993). I will discuss these understandings more in Chapter ten.

My story

I should state at the beginning of this chapter that my experiences have led me to the belief that learning is *inherently* transformative but it is the context *within which that learning occurs* which determines whether the transformation is positive or negative. I was able to explore this assumption during the collaborative conversation phase of this investigation and received broad support for it although each of the conversation co-creators did nuance it in their own way (conversations with Anderson, 2006; Cajete, 2006; Crowell, 2007; Dirkx, 2006; Goodman, 2006; Hart, 2006; London, 2007; Nakagawa, 2006; O'Sullivan, 2006). I discuss this assumption in more detail in Chapter eight.

The learning experiences I had during my primary and junior schooling were generally negative. They led me to believe that I did not fit in, that I was not smart enough and that I did not have the basic skills required to do well at school. I was educated through the State

system in England. My primary and junior school experiences were memorable only for two things. The first was occasional minor bullying (because of the way I looked, because I was not in the 'in-group' and because I had an unusual name), and the second was repeated lunchtime detention during which I had to rewrite work in which my handwriting had been deemed of unacceptable quality. It should be noted that the only remedial action taken regarding the standard of my writing was to demand that the work was redone during these lunchtime sessions in a neater hand, as if mere repetition under punitive conditions would result in higher quality and levels of readability. It is now known that stress impacts on learning and these sessions were inherently stressful for me which made the whole process of dubious pedagogic value (Laszlo, 2008b; Laszlo & Currivan, 2008; Laszlo et al., 2003). These experiences reinforced my tendency to be a rather insular boy who enjoyed playing out complex scenarios, with or without toys, in my own space, rather than playing with other children, and who enjoyed drawing and building things for myself to enhance the complex scenarios I imagined, rather than playing sports and undertaking team activities. I was also prone to anxiety attacks and feelings of insecurity which led me to assume, amongst other things, that I was always about to be in trouble although I rarely actually was. I carried these feelings with me as I moved onto secondary school which I undertook at a grammar school.

The newly created school was a product of the lack of grammar school places in the school district and drew from a relatively small geographical and socio-economic area. This led to a large cohort of white, middle-class students and a very much smaller cohort of students from differing cultural and economic backgrounds. I believe that throughout my schooling there were no pupils from anything other than white, European, Christian backgrounds in my academic year. This experience no doubt shaped my worldview particularly with respect to the role of formal education as underpinning a successful middle-class life. All the pupils in this year had successfully completed the 11-plus examination in order to be there. This right of passage was known amongst students to be the first life-changing point they would encounter. The tension on the day of the examination was high and the relief in my family of my passing this examination was equally palpable. However, once the results were out, including offers to attend the new grammar school, one classmate endeavoured, in public and in front of my teacher, to convince me that my letter was not like the ones received by other people. He inferred that I had, in some way, achieved a second grade pass and inferred that I merely scraped in. An assertion the teacher did not see fit to

contradict. So the result of my passing the 11-plus examination, rather than freeing me from the educational inferiority I had experienced to date, was to reinforce it and to continue the occasional and subtle psychological bullying I had previously experienced as I was introduced to secondary schooling. This experience reinforced the ongoing negative transformation of Self that I was engaged in at school.

The formality of the grammar school provided a range of what Spradley (1980) termed as artefacts. These included school uniforms (including a blazer with a school badge bearing a coat of arms especially created for the school), the Latin proverb (*Prospice* meaning forward), the Headmaster in a traditional gown, the school song sung in formal school assemblies and discipline meted out with the cane. All these artefacts were indicators of an established English school with long traditions, even though the year I entered the school was the first of its existence and my academic year was the senior year all the way through our secondary schooling. The school traditions were being formed each day through the behaviour and attitudes of teachers and students under the direction of the Headmaster and senior staff. The curriculum included Latin and classical studies, as well as the usual English, mathematics, languages, sciences and so on. All the subjects were treated discretely with the only cross-curricular activity being the annual drama production which brought together drama, art and technology classes. Sports comprised soccer and rugby (union) in the winter and cricket in the summer, with one compulsory cross-country run per year. As a new school, the members of staff were eager to gain a formidable reputation in all areas, particularly in academic results and sport. Student excellence in either of these areas seemed to ensure *close* support and attention from the staff, excellence in music and drama garnered the students *some* support and attention and, in turn, mediocrity in all of these areas ensured *disinterest and minimal* support and attention from the staff. Unfortunately I fell into the latter category. The overall effect of this practice resulted in the marginalisation of mediocre or average students. This period continued the slow and incremental negative epistemological transformation for me. In practice, this meant that I generally felt overlooked and uninvolved, and hence I moved through my school years without the feelings and experiences of mutual support, reciprocity and community that school can bring. Undoubtedly the school was a product of the Western worldview and was seeking to provide future generations to support that worldview. However, the negative epistemological transformation I experienced only distanced me from that goal.

I found schoolwork academically challenging. Even in the subjects I liked, I could not recall the key dates (in the case of history), or the key formula and methodology (in the case of physics and mathematics) and languages were equally impenetrable. Looking back, I simply had trouble grasping the key concepts when they were first taught. Humans naturally use systems thinking to make meaning and build on their previous sensual and experiential encounters (Clark Jr, 1997). The pedagogy used in my and I suspect many other, schools of the time contributed to the suppression of this natural tendency. This lack of an integrated framework is like showing individual frames of a motion picture and assuming that viewers will not only understand the plot but also solve the mystery contained therein (Clark Jr, 1997). I also had trouble revising for examinations since I could not bring the concepts, formulae and dates to the front of my mind when they never really settled in my mind in the first place. Essentially the education that I received in the English public system resulted in the feeling of hopelessness and of being deprived of the kind of education that was my right, that is, an "education…directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms" (United Nations General Assembly, 1948, article 26, para. 2). Instead of revelling in the opportunities school provided I preferred to escape into novels and into my own imagination. On reflection, the idea that education is a partnership between the teacher and the learner (Cockerill, 1999), with teachers "nurtur[ing] the development and productive use of each child's unique talents and gifts" (Stoddard, 1995, p. 247) seems as distant from my experience at school as I am now from the school itself. Consequently, school life and the formal learning experiences that school provided were not terribly rewarding. My parents periodically tried to do something to help, such as, 'no playing on a Saturday until you've written a story' (this only lasted two weeks) and provision of extra mathematics tuition (this lasted for a term or two). However, both strategies were ultimately unsuccessful. Clearly, practicing reinforcement of an ineffective educational approach is equally unproductive. It is very much like shouting at a foreigner who does not speak the language in an effort to get them to understand. My self-esteem, already shaky from the effects of primary and junior school, was not enhanced by these experiences which continued to reinforce the negative epistemological transformation that formal education was providing.

Juxtaposed to this were two things that my parents did do for me. They gave me a love of reading and a love for the outdoors. There were always books in the house and all of us

were always reading. I went straight from Hardy Boys Mysteries and Westerns to reading Robert Ludlum, Fredrick Forsythe and Len Deighton at the age of eleven or twelve years old. Not high literature perhaps but it provided a large amount of realistic content served up in an interesting and engaging context. Russian educator VA Sukhomlinsky believed that one of the ways to make study easier is "for students to read widely and extend their interests far beyond th[e] curriculum" (Cockerill, 1999, p. 27). This certainly helped me, although there was no demonstrable improvement in results at school and, on reflection, I suspect it may have actually made me retreat further into myself.

We had a large garden bordering a field so I also spent a lot of time outside, playing and using my imagination to construct complex and ongoing play scenarios, activities which Sukhomlinsky also favoured as a catalysts for learning (Cockerill, 1999). Being in the natural environment plays an important role in opening a person's senses and aiding them in embodying knowledge (Haskell & Linds, 2001), and imagination "is necessary for perceiving and understanding the world" (Sloan, 1983, p. 140). So these play activities helped my understanding of the world around me. I also spent a large amount of time in the countryside, walking and exploring national parks, gardens, ruined castles, museums, battlefields and stately homes with the family, which sparked my interest in the outdoors itself, history and militaria – perhaps not unusual for a young boy. Interests which, to a lesser or greater degree are still maintained today. Later, I spent a lot of time long-distance hiking and cycling in England, Scotland and Wales. I also did some climbing, pot-holing and canoeing, initially in groups such as the Scouts or on outward bound–type courses, but later, more often than not, alone. I had realised that the subtle psychological bullying I had and was, experiencing at school was also prevalent in such groups as the Scouts and even in short-term experiences such as outdoor experience holidays. I recall wondering in my early teens why some people were moved to take advantage of others for no demonstrable benefits other than enhancing their own ego. On reflection, I suspect it is a manifestation of the use and misuse of power which can be observed in society at large, reflected in any given microcosm or snapshot of that society. Ironically this actually reflects the holarchical or holographic nature of the universe (Bohm, 1980; Talbot, 1991; Wilber, 1982b). I will explore this point and the relationship between the holarchical and holographic universe and marginalisation in Chapter ten.

Solitary immersion in nature brought peace and attainable personal challenges in an environment without pressure that I unconsciously respected and enjoyed. Crowell says "living our lives in harmony with Nature also means to live life in harmony with our True Nature" (2002, p. 19) and that this has implications for our health, the way we act in the world and how we maintain the "dynamic balance of our lives" (Crowell, 2002, p. 19). This relationship between nature and activity and learning and health is also a feature of Sukhomlinsky's work (Cockerill, 1999). At the time I was unaware of this aspect of outdoor activity but I did enjoy the experience of being outside in the elements. As a consequence I learned a lot about a broad range of things including myself, providing a stimulus for me to develop enhanced self-awareness and independent thought, interests and style.

It was around this time I had my first epistemologically transformative experience, in that it was the first where I truly experienced a shift in my consciousness. As a teenager, I was attending an outdoor activity holiday for youngsters. One activity involved being allocated a portion of isolated land, maybe twenty metres by twenty metres in size, a groundsheet, water and some emergency rations. The aim was to attempt to spend twenty-four hours alone, free from human contact. I discovered three things from this activity. First, I was entirely comfortable when alone in nature. Second, for me immersion in nature is a deeply meditative experience, not in the formal sense of institutionalised spiritual practice but in the practical sense of everyday Zen or Taoism. Third, I was so engrossed in simply *Being* and *Experiencing* in the area I had been allocated that it became 'my place', so much so that when the activity leaders returned to pick me up I did not see them until they stepped over the threshold into my place. I could not believe it had been twenty-four hours. My experience there had been timeless and I did not want to leave. I had developed what has been called *place-view* which allowed me to "…reimagine [my] relationship to nature and to articulate the responsibilit[ies] that grow from…understanding that relationship" (Sobel, 2004, p. v). Place-view reflects an ecological interpretation of community which includes nature as a significant component in the context which an individual or community exists within. It provides a more holarchical interpretation than might be gathered from the more prevalent term of worldview (Sobel, 2004). I later found out they were keeping an eye on us and pulled people out who were having difficulty and it seems I was the only person to stay for the full twenty-four hours. For me, at that juncture, there was nowhere else. I was completely integrated into that place and nature was my friend. For twenty-four hours I

had lived a *Flow* experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). I never looked at the outdoors or myself the same way again. This experience was transformative. It changed who I was, how I felt about myself and how I related to the outdoors in general and nature specifically. It gave me the new understanding that in nature all entities, all experiences, all relationships and all phenomena are equally important as they all contribute to the balance and harmony of the holon and holarchy that is the Earth, as well as the ultimate holarchy of the known universe and beyond. I also realised that I need not meet others' expectations in order to feel self-respect. This was the first time I caught a glimpse of the interconnectedness of humanity's existence with nature.

Later on during the same outdoor activity holiday I again had an epistemologically transformative experience. This experience also took place in communion with nature. I was on a walking trip with a small group of others in an area I had walked before but that had bad memories for me. On my previous trip to these mountains a couple of years earlier my two companions repeatedly walked away from me, did not wait at breaks and mocked my need to re-hydrate myself, behaviour which led to me suffering heat-stroke. This experience seriously damaged my self-esteem. The return trip was being particularly badly led. I had slipped twice because of the bad weather causing injuries to both my knees that still affect me today, while others had suffered hypothermia and exhaustion, both of which were generally ignored or treated as a lack of fitness by the leaders. Towards the end of the day we were coming down a steep mountain alongside a waterfall. The sky was angry. We were being pummelled with wind and horizontal rain, as we headed for a campsite next to a lake at the foot of this particular descent. Then, as if to prove the injudiciousness of being out there that day, there was lightning. Cloud cover felt like it was hovering just above our heads. Everyone and everything was soaked and the lightning streaked from cloud to lake as we descended precariously. Anyone could have been hit at any time. On reaching the plateau we pitched camp. In a reflection of the poor leadership and general failure to respect nature, more than a few of the group found that not only they, but their packs, clothes and bedding were all soaked. My hiking partner and I, both experienced hikers, distributed our own dry sleeping bags and clothing to the grateful group, making do with the minimum in order to provide some comfort to others who were freezing. This experience was transformative for me because it was that day, as my companion and I pitched our dry tent and changed into dry clothes, that I again realised three things. First, the title of leader does not necessarily guarantee sufficient expert knowledge or even

common sense. Second, that I had knowledge and skills appropriate to this situation and possibly superior to others in the group. Finally, that I had sensibilities superior to those leading the group. It was this trip that gave me the feeling that I might have something meaningful to contribute to others. It also gave coherence to my sense of morals and ethics in group dynamics as well as the responsibilities of a leader. I was fourteen years old and after that day I was no longer the same person as I was before. Grigg notes "*Awe* is the acknowledgement of humility. …From *Awe* comes respect. From respect comes restraint. Without restraint there will be misfortune" [my emphasis] (1989, p. 143). This was the trip which gave me humility, respect and restraint in my interactions with nature to balance the confidence I had gained during my earlier experience of communing with nature. I had experienced a shift in consciousness and thereafter walking became a deeply meditative and restorative process, not because it is an opportunity to withdraw and be insular but because it is an opportunity to recharge and to allow the power of nature to nourish my soul through immersion and acknowledgement of the interconnectedness of life. The deep connection with nature gained during these two experiences ensured, on the one hand, deep respect for the power of nature and on the other self-assurance, much as described by others who have experienced similar connections (Brown Jr & Watkins, 1978; Elder, 1991; Jardine, 2000). I felt that if I continued to show respect for nature it would not harm me. This respect came from the understanding that in any single experience there are countless entities, relationships, experiences and phenomena which interact to create the holistic experience and if there is an imbalance within or between the entities, relationships, experiences and phenomena then the resultant holistic experience will be negative. This is an understanding that could be called an evolutionary epistemological holon (Koestler, 1967).

Finally, I reached the age of sixteen, a milestone in the age of any English student, it was O-level time. O-levels were the examinations that every school student took to determine if they were going to stay on at school past the age of sixteen for another two years. If they did they would be expected to take their A-levels examinations and, if all went well, almost certainly go to university. For as long as I could remember there had always been the assumption (stated and unstated) that I would join the Army. Once this critical year came around decisions needed to be made about what career I might take when I left school. I discovered that my parents expected me to join the Army only if I began in officer training rather than as a non-commissioned soldier. Officer training meant two

more years at school and satisfactory completion of A-levels. This came as a shock to me because having reached sixteen, no one believed I would be staying on at school and suddenly I felt completely adrift and betrayed. The power dynamics in my family ensured I would not dream of enlisting without my parent's permission. I knew I was not academically inclined but to not have the chance to join the Army at all was a complete shock. Consequently I had absolutely no idea of what I would do. At the time vocational education and training (VET) had not yet emerged as an option for school students such as myself who may be viewed as being less academically focussed than others. So the only option was to leave school, but to do what? It seemed that school was only focussed on getting the students through to university and that was not an option for me. I had been let down again by the formal education system's inability to prepare those it marginalised for a life other than a school-to-university transition. Dewey believed that finding one's "true business" is the right of everybody as well as the way for a person to contribute effectively to society. He said:

> …an occupation is the only thing which balances the distinctive capacity of an individual with his [sic] social service. To find out what one is fitted to do and to secure the opportunity to do it is the key to happiness. (1916, ch. 23 p. 3)

There are questions in my mind about whether one needs a job in order to contribute effectively to society (social service), or indeed to be happy. However, the essence of this view is that finding an occupation is more than simply getting a job it is the search for a vocation, what Palmer (2000) describes as a calling and which allows a person to balance all aspects of their life (Burns, 1995). I explore these issues in Chapter ten.

I hoped that I might find a career working in the outdoors, preferably in the natural environment in an area such as game-keeping or even as an outdoor activity leader. Unfortunately fields such as these have relatively few positions and are either effectively a 'closed shop' employing people who are known to the incumbent or organisation or they require a university degree. Increasing credentialisation has been a feature of the last forty years or so in Western societies. A trend which contributes to the marginalisation of the less academically minded students (conversation with Anderson, 2006). I always enjoyed using my hands and making things so my parents suggested a craft-based trade. A few were considered but lack of work in some of the areas I was interested in such as cabinet making limited the field. My parents enquired on my behalf at local technical colleges (the equivalent of an Australian Technical and Further Education (TAFE) college) regarding

courses. O-level time came and went and, as predicted, I failed to pass a subject. I did, however, have the opportunity to go to technical college and took up full-time study of a craft, cookery, which I was not overly enthusiastic about but I discovered I did have some aptitude for, thanks to my mother who had schooled me in culinary basics for years during school holidays.

Delivery of vocationally-oriented content at technical college took the form of practical and theoretical lessons covering all aspects of classical French cooking as was the norm at the time. There was also a simulated 'real-life' practical component. Upon reflection, however, the simulated environment was nothing like a real workplace. Delivery of the theoretical component closely resembled delivery of theoretical content at school, with the teacher delivering decontextualised information in a formal classroom setting, although the practical and simulated real-life components did provide some limited contextualisation. Assessment largely consisted of multiple choice and short answer questions and practical skills tests but also included written examinations. The full-time vocational education that I experienced utilised what has been called the front-end loading model (Foley, 1995) where knowledge, skills and attitudes were taught before the need arose in order that they may be applied in practical situations later. This model is inherently flawed when it is used on its own because "real work situations are complex and fluid: they do not wait for theories to be applied to them" (Foley, 1995, pp. 5-6). In my experience, it is inadequate to solely teach the complex skills required in the workplace in a simulated work environment, because the simulation will rarely replicate the complex nature of the workplace with its inherent conflicting priorities and stresses, without which the simulation is nowhere near real. In practice, however, the need of modern society to provide education to those who are not in the workplace in order to prepare them to enter it means that full-time vocational education is still required, it cannot simply be replaced by learning in the workplace since there are few possibilities to gain employment without either qualifications or experience, or in many cases both. This pedagogical model tends to ignore the multiple ways of knowing which stimulate adult learners and the related assessment strategies do not adequately ensure workplace competence either. This model is problematic because it has a tendency to reduce the holistic application of knowledge, skills, attitudes and experience which an expert exhibits to the ability to demonstrate discreet aspects of this experience in isolation from the impacts of the wider context. It has a tendency "to elevate the technical over the interpersonal and the individual over the group" (Chappell, Gonczi, & Hager,

1995, p. 178), ignoring the relationships and connections which are inherent in the workplace and in the wider society, as well as the role of the individual within them. It also ignores the multiple contexts that surround the use of this knowledge in the workplace and the greater contexts of people's lives (Burns, 1995). However, it appears that modern society expects systemic differentiation because:

> …modern [educational structures and systems] are commonly organised around these [differentiated systems]. …Teachers…think about education with this 'natural' bias toward delineating the world into highly differentiated functional fields, each governed by technical specialists. … reduc[ing] our thinking to key words associated with the specific technical aspects [those functions]. (Oliver & Gershman, 1989, p. 12)

Full-time technical college gave way to the world of work where I found out quickly that the skills gained at college, whilst *technically* those required in the workplace, bore little resemblance to what was *actually* required. At best I and my peers could have been considered as "workplace ready but not workplace competent" (Hagar, 1994, p. 10). On reflection, the transition from college to work also reinforced the déjà vu-type experience of subtle and not so subtle, psychological and physical bullying and organisational politics that were strangely similar to school, but with more physical overtones.

Twelve years in this trade gave me experiences in many parts of the United Kingdom and in the former Yugoslavia and these experiences provided many opportunities for learning. However, these learning opportunities were largely informal, experiential and hard to quantify, what has been described as the authentic learning of experience and reflection (Hagar, 1997). As well as the positive aspects of socialisation (conversation with Crowell, 2007) into a trade, I also saw people subjected to physical and mental humiliation as well as to a seemingly endless round of distasteful innuendo and potentially dangerous practical jokes. The common refrain from supervisors was 'if we do not break them they are better for it, if we do, they leave'. It was also common to hear of people who had yet to acquiesce through this kind of behaviour as 'not fitting in' or as 'not being one of the team'. Rather than being a strict power play this behaviour sought to break the bonds of connectedness a person had on entering the workplace and rebuild them as one of the dominant group strengthening it in order to further marginalise those who were deemed unfit.

That said, I was able to move through the workplace structures and, in due course, gained department head positions, all on the basis of my craft certificates and practical experience (skills gained on-the-job), even though this involved working in thirteen cities (two of

them twice) in four countries, in twelve years, which made developing lasting relationships difficult. The industry I had chosen was all-consuming. It included long working days of usually between ten and fifteen hours per day, often six and occasionally seven days a week, for generally poor pay in relation to the working conditions. The work was high-pressure and high-stress shift work. There was a certain level of community in that everyone worked in the same environment and felt the same stress which provided a bond. However because of minimal staffing, when one person had a rostered day off it was likely that their colleagues would be working. If someone was on recreational or sick leave then this would dramatically increase the pressure on those who remained, causing resentment of those who were absent which might be maintained for weeks or months after the person returned. This pattern of behaviour led to either isolation or to intense socialisation that invariably occurred late at night. The bonds of community or common oneness (Bopp & Bopp, 2001) with family, friends and community were eroded and ultimately destroyed to be replaced by new relationships formed through the work environment that were often mutually destructive. These new relationships facilitated drug and alcohol abuse, violence, antisocial activity, health issues, relationship breakdown, depression and meaningless sex, some of which I experienced myself and all of which I frequently observed. Far from being one's true business (Dewey, 1916) or vocation (Palmer, 2000) then, for many people, including myself, these experiences were soul-destroying. Because this behaviour was common to those in the same work community and was viewed as normal there was little or no respite possible without changing one's workplace, or more likely, one's whole career, since this pattern of behaviour was endemic at all levels of the industry at that time. At a personal level, I spent twelve years being tired, stressed, anxious and, at times, scared for my well-being. I kept a semblance of balance through the inclusion of drawing, music, film, reading, cycling and nature (through hiking) in my life, but overall this period was one where I experienced an ongoing negative transformation of Self which, early on, shaped the patterns of behaviour that would continue for at least a decade and a half.

In 1997, the same craft certificates that I gained twelve years earlier which initially allowed me to enter the world of work were instrumental in my gaining permanent residency, and later citizenship, in Australia where my wife and I came in search of a better life. Whilst in England, my qualifications and experience were considered neither portable across industries, nor suitable for recognition by the higher education sector. Moving to Australia, however, showed that they were portable across international borders

and facilitated my gaining employment only three weeks after stepping off the plane. Reflecting on my experiences in the hospitality industry, the thought of going back to it was not welcome. I decided I wanted to change my career, but what would I do? I did not know how to do anything except cook and manage a team of up to forty-five ethnically and culturally diverse people. Shortly after arriving in Australia I found employment with a private vocational education and training provider and was contracted to teach cookery and associated subject matter to adults and thus began my association with the Australian Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector. This work provided an opportunity to use the skills I had learned in industry and apply them in a different situation as well as pass on what I had learned both formally and informally to others. Sukhomlinsky described this as "entering into moral relations with another person" (1979-1980, pp. 358-359). He believed "a person is being truly educated only when they pass their knowledge, experience and mastery on to someone else" (1979-1980, pp. 358-359). He equated teaching and learning in any context with a spiritual experience. Finally, he believed true self-education only occurs by entering into a reciprocal learning relationship with another person where technical, social and spiritual capital are increased.

I had previously enjoyed the opportunity to pass on skills and knowledge to others and to learn from the experience but had never worked in an environment that provided anything more than cursory attention to it, so this seemed an excellent opportunity to take the knowledge and skills I had and pass them on whilst moving into another career. My entry into the vocational training industry coincided with the requirement for all trainers and assessors to hold the Certificate IV, Workplace Training and Workplace Assessor qualifications. This became my first experience of formal, off-job learning since leaving technical college and, as I would find out later, the beginning of an epistemological experience which would transform the rest of my life and ultimately leading to this document. My employer organised for this training to occur and I duly gained the certificate by utilising my daily work of lesson preparation, assessment and evaluation as material to be submitted for my own qualification. Studying for this qualification whilst working in the industry helped me to better understand the world of adult education by providing appropriate ongoing contextualisation. Reverting to my previous approach to learning I began to read widely, initially around the areas of adult education and vocational training and assessment but later expanding my repertoire into subject areas I felt were related or relevant. This was a key juncture for me and coincided with a whole lifestyle

change. I felt my horizons widen and doors open. I felt that I was able to experience life for the first time in a very long time. It felt like I was leaving a darkened room and entering the light. This experience signalled the beginning of another shift in consciousness. It was the beginning of a positive epistemological and ontological transformation.

I worked for private training providers for two and a half years and our learners came from a range of social, cultural, vocational and educational backgrounds. Their ages ranged from sixteen year olds to people in their fifties. The groups were diverse and included learners from a range of backgrounds in each group. Many of the learners were people who could not access education from the State-run Technical and Further Education (TAFE) sector for some reason, or had been sent to undergo training by employment case officers in order to receive unemployment or other benefits. Rather than an environment which facilitated the transformation of people's lives by opening up a range of educational employment opportunities, vocational education and training was firmly situated in the training market-place (Anderson, 1997), with organisations bidding for government contracts at the lowest possible price whilst trying to minimise the costs once the contracts had been secured. Upon entering the vocational education and training sector, what I found was an education system that was industrialised, financially-oriented and governed and dismissive of the varied needs of the learners and their communities. The beautiful bringing forth of knowledge in others that is supposedly a feature of the relationship between the teacher and the learner was non-existent. The marketisation of learning had introduced an imbalance into the system which negated the potentiality for positive transformation for many of our learners (conversation with Anderson, 2006). The irony of this did not escape me given that there was a significant emphasis within the sector that was focussed on access and equity. Indeed, many of our students had already been marginalised to some degree by the compulsory education system and hoped that a post-compulsory vocational qualification would provide them with the opportunity to reduce the effects of this marginalisation. These hopes were much the same as those I had felt all many years earlier.

Despite the negative aspects of the VET sector I had discovered that teaching was something I essentially enjoyed and found rewarding so I began reading more widely around the subject. Whilst reading a journal one day I saw an advert for a Bachelor of

Adult and Vocational Education degree (by distance education) through the University of Tasmania. I decided to apply because I thought it would, at least, help me cement my career change in this new arena. To my surprise I was awarded a place, with partial credit, based on my work experience and my Certificate IV. At the time I had never used a computer and had not written an essay since school so the emotional baggage I carried was quite large and the experience very challenging. However, I shortly discovered that solitary distance education was suitable for me. I read widely and my studies introduced me to the broader world of adult education and more specifically the field of adult and vocational education. It also introduced me to the work of Malcolm Knowles (*The adult learner: A neglected species* (1978)), Stephen Brookfield (*Becoming a critically reflective teacher* (1995)) and Robert Burns (*The adult learner at work* (1995)) amongst others. This experience was very rich for me. It contributed to the positive epistemological and ontological transformation, or shift in consciousness, I was experiencing.

My reading reinforced for me the necessity for, and complex nature of, the provision of contextualised learning for all learners at all levels and across all sectors. I recognised that the learning environments that were created for our students were not particularly effective either in providing the knowledge and skills people needed for their own self-development, or for providing the next generation of workers to maintain Western society. I realised that the VET environment was not as liberating as I had hoped it would be because of the broader context that VET existed within. However, I felt an affinity with the learners I encountered and, experiencing an almost continuous shift in consciousness, became determined to work within the system to affect change for the learners whilst still complying with its regulatory and reporting requirements. Undertaking my undergraduate degree and the exposure it gave me to educational theory and critique inspired me to act on the feelings and impulses I was experiencing. I felt connected to my students, to the challenges they faced and to their experiences of formal post-compulsory education. The strength of this connection was due, no doubt, to the experiences that made up my own learning journey.

Through my work and study experiences I came to believe educators have a broader responsibility than producing the next generation of workers and I wondered what the baseline for that broader responsibility should be. I began to see my existence as a part of an integrated system and became interested in systems thinking. This understanding

highlighted the issues of social, economic, educational and environmental injustice which are perpetrated world-over by those with power upon those without it. Since "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere" (King, 1963, p. 78) and "as long as there is exploitation of one person by another in this world one cannot educate love for all humanity because humanity doesn't exist in abstract" (Sukhomlinsky, 1979-1981, p. 159), I started to believe that education could be used to help adults in marginalised communities. I looked to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights for guidance. My experiences at school and technical college combined with my experiences in the VET sector suggested that it was doubtful that more than a fraction of modern formal education fulfilled even the essence of Article twenty-six in the Declaration (noted earlier in this chapter). That awareness convinced me that something needed to be done and I should do my part. I was beginning to sense a strengthening of vocation, that is, I felt a calling based in the "truths and values at the heart of my own identity" (Palmer, 2000, p. 4). It was during this time I finished my degree. However, at a time when I should have felt elated and full of self-confidence I felt disappointed. The whole experience of changing my career, undertaking a degree and gaining that degree gave me a deeper understanding of not only adult learners in general but also myself. In and of itself this was an epistemologically, ontologically and axiologically transformative experience but immersion in the *business* of vocational education and training gave me an entirely different view of the role of education. That view was that, rather than simply providing the next generation of workers, learning could be a vehicle for social justice and transformation at an individual, familial, communal and societal level. I was no longer just thinking of my own situation or that of my students but also of the wider context of the world's ecology, that is, the way all entities, processes, relationships, experiences and phenomena in the world interact and interconnect (Cajete, 1994). It was this awareness that was truly transformative and contributed significantly to the shift in consciousness that had begun when I entered the post-compulsory education sector.

Again using my standard approach to learning, I continued reading. I was looking for an approach to education which allowed learning to be a wholesome activity for the teacher and the learner, as well as the broader contexts within which their lives were situated. I determined that this should include developing a relationship with the natural world which was sustainable, including being respectful to community culture, traditions and beliefs. It was at this time that I came across the following statement:

> I am firmly convinced that the human personality is inexhaustible; each may become a creator, leaving behind a trace upon the Earth….There should not be any nobodies—specks of dust cast upon the wind. Each one must shine, just as billions upon billions of galaxies shine in the heavens. (Sukhomlinsky, 1987, p. 116)

I felt like I had experienced an epiphany. This statement coalesced my experiences, feelings and reflections and motivated me to read more of Sukhomlinsky's work and to seek an epistemology which embodied the essence of his statement (above).

My reading initially took me through versions of what may be described as alternative education. However, I realised that much alternative education is rooted in the particular interest or background of the author (Forbes, 2003) and can be narrowly focussed and limiting, which was contrary to my ontological and epistemological understandings. This realisation drew me to the concept of *Holistic Education* because in a general sense, holistic education is not a curriculum or methodology but is a set of assumptions that "recognises that humans seek meaning, not just facts or skills, as an intrinsic aspect of their full and healthy development…[and that]…only healthy, fulfilled human beings create a healthy society" (Chicago Group, 1990, p. 1). Holistic education challenges the role of education in the Western worldview. Holistic educators believe that "the purpose of education is to nourish the growth of every person's intellectual, emotional, social, physical, artistic and spiritual potentials" (Miller, 1998, pp. 118-119). They also believe that "a pervasive unity exists, not only on Earth, but in the totality of the universe" (Gang, 1998, p. 133). So holistic education, rather than being prescriptive in curriculum or methods, simply seeks to address the whole person within the wider context of their existence. I explore holistic education specifically and holistic epistemologies more generally in Chapter three.

As an adult educator, the creation of an environment of reciprocity and trust within a holistic epistemology seemed likely to address the educational challenges faced by the learners I was associated with as well as recognising their uniqueness. However, inherent in holistic education is the acknowledgement of the spiritual dimension of all existence. Initially I had some trouble incorporating this dimension into vocationally-oriented teaching and learning experiences. No doubt because at this stage I equated spirituality with religion and religious elements are often seen as taboo in secular and especially vocational education environments. My own religious and spiritual background was complex although probably not uncommon. My family had attended a local Anglican

church since before I was born. At fourteen years old I was given the opportunity to choose whether to continue attending church or not and I chose not to. I simply did not believe in a single, all-powerful, theistic being even though I was brought up in an Anglican household, going to church each Sunday with the whole family and singing in the church choir. However, I was fully aware of the power of nature and felt a deep connection to it. I doubt I would have described this connection as spiritual at that time. I simply felt and acknowledged the mystery of the universe. This acknowledgement meant that, rather than denying the existence of God (or for that matter any other all-powerful theistic being), it was simply impossible for me to know anything about the existence of God and therefore could not draw conclusions and, as such, I was agnostic rather than atheistic, what was recently described as reflecting a "position of humility" (personal communication with O'Sullivan, 2008).

In my early twenties this agnosticism led me to explore some Eastern spiritual traditions such as Buddhism and Taoism, through the reading of texts and taking a general interest in such matters. In my mid-twenties I still felt more of an affinity to those traditions rather than any Christian tradition and took up T'ai Chi Chuan and continued reading. Although enjoying the physical aspects of this practice I did not experience the mind/body connection of truly integrated practice. I did return to it again later, although the result was the same; it appeared my mind was getting in the way and I was *Thinking* rather than *Being* (Hocking, Haskell, & Linds, 2001b). During my years in the workplace I had developed an ontology (a way of being) based on thinking, detailed planning and controlling the work environment. This way of being sought to minimise my anxieties with regard to inadequacy, accountability and blame sublimating to some degree the self-confidence and balance I had achieved in earlier transformative experiences. The cultural conditioning (Krishnamurti, 1953, 1994b, 2000c, 2005) inherent in the Western worldview is intellectual and I was thoroughly in my head, thinking and analysing every situation I encountered. I realised that Eastern traditions are rooted in a different ontological and epistemological framework which reflected my emerging acknowledgement of the interconnectedness of the universe. However, at the time it was difficult for me to see past the epistemological and ontological obstacles that I had acquired during my life.

Despite my discomfort around the spiritual dimension of holistic education I felt a holistic approach was worth pursuing so I continued my learning journey. In my reading I felt the literature was confusing around discussion of *Soul* and *Spirit*. Some writers in the area of holistic education talk of the spirit. Others write about the soul (for example, 'nourishing the soul' and 'soul work'). Some use the terms exclusively and some interchangeably. It was clear to me that having an unambiguous understanding of soul and spirit was critical to me fully conceptualising the scope and power of holistic education. Having found nothing definitive in the literature I looked to other sources, beginning with the *Compact Oxford English Dictionary* definitions, which were: "Soul: the moral, emotional or intellectual nature of a person" and "Spirit: the vital animating essence of a person or animal" (Soanes, 1990, p. 1099 & p. 1110). Unfortunately, the dictionary was not entirely clear in this area either. In addition to those above it also provided definitions for each term which included the other. This exploration prompted me to reflect at length on the information I had gleaned so far and eventually I defined soul/spirit together as 'the moral and ethical core of a person. They affect the way a person acts and interacts with those around them including the environment'. This served as my working definition for a while although I always felt uneasy. I believed it was limited, inadequate and shallow. I felt it was too grounded and intellectually-oriented to fully grasp the mystery of the soul.

In my teaching I had been working with people from a number of cultures including Indigenous Australians. This led me to read widely in the area of Indigenous culture and Indigenous epistemologies and I discovered Dr. Gregory Cajete's book *Look to the mountain: An ecology of Indigenous education* (1994). I also discovered that there appeared to be a number of synergies, not only between different Indigenous cultures, but also between Indigenous epistemologies and holistic education. This is not to infer that all cultures that might be called Indigenous are identical, but rather that there are simply synergies within and between them. I decided to explore these perceived synergies more fully and, since in Indigenous cultures there is no differentiation between learning, work and life, the application for my work was obvious. I embarked on a Master of Education (Human Relations and Community Education) part-time through the Australian Catholic University in order to explore these synergies. I discuss Indigenous cultures in Chapter four of this document.

It was around this time that I also changed employers and job. I moved from private training providers to TAFE and moved from working as a trainer and administrator to working as a project manager and an instructional designer for OTEN (the Open Training and Education Network - the distance education arm of TAFENSW). This work provided a different perspective on post-compulsory learning in general, and the Australian VET sector specifically, bringing a different focus to the issues of learning delivery, assessment, access, equity, literacy, quality, validity and ethics in vocational education and training.

It was shortly after this that I had my next epistemologically transformative experience. This experience also occurred in communion with nature. I was standing on a ledge under a sandstone overhang, dark billowing clouds overhead, blustery wind and rain blowing around me and large, grey, waves crashing onto the rocks beneath me. In a single moment, seeing the waves emerge, continue, transform and vanish as they crashed on to the rocks. I had an epiphany, not in the religious sense but in a spiritual sense (that is, a revelatory event in which the essential nature of something is revealed). I saw the rocks, the sea, the waves, the sky, the wind, the clouds and the rain. I saw the *Awe*some interconnectedness of the universe in the power of nature and I saw my relationship to it. For much of my life I have somehow known that the universe is a unique, interconnected, living network of relationships. This knowing was more of a feeling, but a feeling that came from the very soul. However, this encounter with the sea led me to consciously acknowledge and appreciate this interconnectedness. The experience was hugely powerful, bringing together long-held feelings, intellectual knowledge and embodied experience. This single moment began the bringing together of all of my other transformative experiences into one epistemological, ontological and axiological understanding. It truly showed me the whole, the holarchy, that is the universe and beyond and my place in it.

Shortly after this experience my learning journey took me to the *2001 Breaking New Ground Conference* at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto. I had decided to submit a paper on my thoughts regarding the applications for holistic education in revitalising marginalised communities. To my surprise my paper was accepted and I self-funded the trip. I was able to meet and talk with some of the leading thinkers and writers in the general field of holistic education including Dr. Sam Crowell, Dr. Jack Miller and Dr. Thomas Moore. This trip provided me with not only another epistemologically transformative experience but, incidentally, also my first experience of a

learning community. I was thirty-four and it had been eighteen years since I'd left compulsory education. I was in a place where the ideas I spoke of were listened to, respected and considered. Discussion was entered into freely and non-judgementally. It felt like a vindication, an affirmation, that I was not engaged in some folly but in really important work. Finally, I felt that I belonged and that I could openly talk of my vocation (Palmer, 2000) and of my emergent relationship with the universe. This learning community continued through repeated visits to this biennial conference, through other such gatherings and via the electronic media. I continued to develop bonds of common oneness with others in the general holistic education community over the next seven years. This first trip to Canada had allowed me to meet a number of Native Canadians, healers, educators and activists who assisted me in my Masters research. Following more work, study, discussion and reflection, but whilst still on this trip, I amended my definition of soul/spirit, choosing to only use the term *Soul* and define it as 'the animating essence of an entity, experience, relationship, or phenomenon (not just human beings). It is that part which connects with the deep mystery of the universe and is naturally in tune with it. It is the soul that provides uniqueness. It affects the way an entity, experience, relationship, or phenomenon interacts with the complexity of contexts they inhabit'.

The experience of the learning community helped me to overcome the hurdle I had with holistic education (the spiritual aspect) and embrace it as an epistemology where I could situate the formal adult education in which I was immersed. The catalyst for this change and the development of my understanding of soul noted above was an encounter with two Indigenous healers and a Reiki Master. It was, perhaps, one of the most powerful experiences of my life and was followed by a guided meditation. This initial encounter occurred unexpectedly in a restaurant on a busy Saturday night in Toronto. Present were myself, the aforementioned two healers and Reiki Master and a mutual friend who worked in Aboriginal literacy programmes. Dinner was a genial affair. I had been in contact with some of the group for some while via email although this was the first time we had actually met. Part way through dinner I noticed the Reiki Master looking at me strangely. The healer on my left noticed it too, indicated in my direction and asked the Master 'where does he hurt?' She replied that I hurt in the front of my head, the base of my skull, neck and shoulders. I said that I had been experiencing pain in those areas for the week or so that I had been in Canada. The healer on my left said 'we know' and got up to stand behind me. The Master asked me to close my eyes and began to take me through some

breathing exercises and visualisation of the pain dissipating. I'd never done this kind of thing before and was embarrassed, nervous, hot and sweating. I looked to my literacy colleague and he began to reassure me saying continually 'everything is fine, nobody is looking at you, relax everything is fine'. The Master continued to coach me through the breathing and visualisation. The healer started to work on my neck, shoulders and back— massage would be too strong a word for what she was doing as it was more like touching critical spots with her fingertips. This went on for what seemed like hours. I was sweating, hot and feeling faint. My literacy colleague was still reassuring me, the Master was still coaching my breathing and suddenly I felt like there were two pairs of hands on my back and neck. I assumed the other healer had got up and was working on me. I opened my eyes and saw her still in her seat and I closed them again quickly. Again I was nervous, hot, sweating, feeling faint and sick. Eventually they stopped and I felt so faint I almost collapsed at the table. My shirt was soaking wet. I went to the bathroom and vomited. I had no idea how much time had passed or what exactly had happened. What I did know was the pain I had been feeling had gone and I was left with just a shadow of a pain, like a body-memory. When I returned, the healer from my left said that normally they 'would have purged me completely but the restaurant was not the appropriate place'. Years later the second healer told me she did get up and work on my back too but that did not explain how she was sitting in her chair when I opened my eyes. Either way the experience had no rational or intellectual explanation and no recounting of it either verbally or in print can do justice to the profound effect it had on me. Later, it was suggested to me by a Mohawk friend that I should not retell this story. That it was between me and the Creator. However, I choose to retell it here with *Awe* and reverence.

The next day at the conference the first session I attended began with a guided meditation. I had had limited experience of such things at the time and my mind always got in the way. This time I expected it to be the same, but instead of having a mind cluttered with thoughts of events passed and plans for future activities I just had blackness, solid, dense blackness. As the meditation progressed I did not see the imagery that the guide was suggesting. I continued to be enveloped in this blackness. There was no fear and suddenly there was a crack of light, I sensed a large thick heavy door opening. I moved (more like drifted) to the opening. I never seemed to quite get there and the door never opened more than a couple of inches. Then, the meditation was over. I had no idea what it meant, if anything (and do not need to), but after these two events the difference in me was obvious, even to others. I

felt lighter, more open and connected – a feeling which dissipated to some degree over time as I rejoined my life but the experience of it has never left me. On reflection, I felt as if I had experienced a very slight connection to the wisdom, insight and praxis that Indigenous people embody and that is inherent in the universe itself.

I completed my Masters degree in two years and it was at this point I experienced a breakthrough in my understanding. I began to make the connection between Holism, Indigenous cultures and my long held interest in Eastern traditions. The experiences of awakening to the interconnected universe and experiencing, even slightly, the wisdom, insight and praxis contained in Indigenous and other spiritual traditions opened me up to what I perceived to be an omnipresent benevolent natural power in and of the universe. Power which has been described as a "source of meaning" (conversation with London, 2007) and "a great mystery" (conversation with Crowell, 2007). This perception motivated me to continue my learning journey by revisiting my interest in Eastern traditions and the "source of life in all things" – the Tao (Wong, 1997, p. 23). I discuss Eastern traditions (or ontologies) in Chapter five.

I continued to work in the area of distance education in the VET sector for a couple of years following the completion of my Masters degree but I felt my learning was unfinished. I longed to explore the unique awareness and feelings I had experienced on my journey to that point. It is common in Eastern ontologies to hear learning described as an endless road. Suzuki Roshi said "in the beginners mind there are may possibilities, but in the experts there are few" (Chödrön, 2002, p. 1), and Krishnamurti said, "[for] the man [sic] who is seeking, ...the search itself is knowledge" (2000a, p. 18). He also emphasised that the learner needs to take from many sources and shape their own views (Krishnamurti, 2000a). I decided to undertake this investigation to explore the understandings, assumptions and working theories that were emerging for me. There was a period of frustration as I tried to work with a supervisor who was not quite on the same wavelength with the work I wanted to do. This resolved itself with another trip to Canada for conferences where I again had the opportunity to speak to experienced colleagues (Dr. Sam Crowell, Dr. John P Miller, Dr. Edmund O'Sullivan and Dr. Marina Quattrocchi) and I resolved to anchor the investigation and subsequent document in my own experiences. Shortly after my return to Australia I changed my job and moved into the higher education sector, although not in an academic position, where I again had the opportunity to manage

a team. I had recently been thinking about the concept of holistic leadership and had been exploring my own ideas regarding it. In this new position I sought to implement those ideas to some degree. Although catalysed by an article in the Journal *Orbit* (Molinaro, 1999), my definition and implementation of holistic leadership is a result of a synergy between all the social, cultural, vocational, educational and spiritual experiences of my life. I discuss holistic leadership in more detail in Chapters six and nine.

Since beginning this journey I have spoken at seventeen conferences in four countries on three continents, given guest lectures and written journal articles and I still find myself continually searching for the nexus between community, adult learning, meaningful work and sustainability. As such, I am very much a work in progress and my journey is far from over. Although I am continually being faced with new anxieties with regard to stress, inadequacy, accountability and blame which seem to be a given within the Western worldview, the epistemological and ontological transformation I have achieved through my social, vocational, educational and spiritual experiences so far helps me to see beyond these epistemological and ontological obstacles to the wholeness/oneness of the universe.

Summary

Looking back over the story that I have detailed in this chapter I see that, as powerful as some experiences may have been in and of themselves, it is together that they opened my mind to recognising the possibility that there is a harmonious ontology which could facilitate the conditions for holistic, transformative epistemologies within the structures of a community with a view to creating a sustainable future for all beings.

Returning to the definition of transformational learning provided earlier (O'Sullivan, 2005, p. 76), I have experienced and am experiencing, a "deep structural shift in the basic premise of thought, feelings and actions". This shift has involved my understanding of myself, the roles of relationship and power in society and my own and humanity's relationship with the natural world. It has also provided me with a vision, that is, a sense of the possibilities for social justice, peace and personal joy and according to Bopp and Bopp (2001), in order for transformation to occur it requires "vision, imagination, volition and learning" (pp. 35-36). These experiences have provided me with a *vision* for an alternate individual, familial, communal and societal future. They have provided sustenance for my *imagination* showing me an alternate epistemology, ontology, axiology and methodology,

validating my own praxis (practice and reflection). They have given me the impetus or *volition* to undertake this work and they are all rooted in *learning*, not just academic learning or workplace learning, but the epistemologically transformative experiences that have become central to my life.

Finally, since transformation is "both an outcome and a process… [and it] creates energy that often catalyses growth extending beyond the individual" (Hart, 2001, p. 150), I hope and believe that the ontological, epistemological, axiological, rhetorical and methodological transformation I am undergoing is affecting those I work with, those who hear me speak and those who read what I write in some positive way. If Laszlo (1996) is correct and humanity is the "coordinating interface system in the multilevel holarchy of nature" (p. 60) then it has an *Awe*some responsibility to ensure the perpetuation not just of the species but of the holarchy which forms its macro-context, the Earth. This means that there is no such thing as context-free or context-neutral decision-making, action or education. As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, some of the moments and experiences I have described here as being transformational have been dramatic, sudden and epiphanal and others have been drawn out, incremental and evolutionary. However, they all relate to the concept of wholeness/oneness in some way, either wholeness/oneness within myself, wholeness/oneness in/of the community or wholeness/oneness in/of the universe.

> Om! That…is whole; whole is this…; From the Invisible Whole comes forth the visible whole. Through the visible whole come out from that Invisible Whole, yet the Whole remains unaltered (Paramananda, 2004, p. 15).

Wholeness/oneness simply is.

Section two: Literature review

Chapter three – Holism

Overview

This section contains four chapters that comprise the literature review. Together Chapters three, four and five distil wisdom, insight and praxis from a seemingly diverse set of meta-narratives in order to determine the common themes within and between those meta-narratives. Chapter six synthesises these common themes and discusses what they might indicate. It explores the interconnected universe and the roles and responsibilities which the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of the meta-narratives explored appear to ascribe to humanity within that interconnected universe. It also discusses the concept of *Perennial Philosophy*, the concept of *Cosmology* and the relationship between them. Finally, this chapter discusses whether the common themes previously identified and synthesised would be more appropriately discussed as the visible forms of a culture's cosmology, rather than as a form of perennial philosophy.

In this chapter I explore Holism the first meta-narrative discussed in this section, including its relationship with the so-called *New Physics* of the twentieth century and the concept of wholeness or oneness which is a common theme running through this document. I also briefly discuss the origins and key aspects of formal *Holistic Education*. Having established this epistemological background I then highlight the eight observable orientations which I see emerging from Holism and holistic epistemologies.

Holism

Wholeness, as a general concept, received increasing amounts of attention in Western philosophy (Bohm, 1980; Koestler, 1967; Laszlo, 2007; Smuts, 1999; Teilhard de Chardin, 2002; Whitehead, 1978; Wilber, 2000b, 1982b) and Western science (Bateson, 2002; Bohm, 1981; Capra, 1991, 1996; Laszlo, 1996, 2008b, 2006d; Tarnas, 1991; von Bertanlaffy, 1969) throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century, but particularly since the mid-nineteen sixties. Ironically, this focus has generally been *within* specific and discreet professional and academic disciplines, such as within the areas of science, medicine, psychology, philosophy, education, social theory or organisational behaviour, rather than in true transdisciplinary work ('trans' meaning "beyond, across, through, pervading" (Tarnas, 2002, p. xv)). In the relatively few cases where

transdisciplinary work has been carried out, it has generally occurred between only two or three related disciplines, work that would be better described as interdisciplinary rather than transdisciplinary or holistic. Of course, the concept of wholeness, which is also variously described as oneness, interrelatedness or interconnectedness has been acknowledged and appreciated for millennia and is still observable in, but is not limited to, the cosmologies, epistemologies and ontologies of many Indigenous cultures and Eastern traditions. I explore these relationships later in this section.

In its twentieth century incarnation it was Jan Christiaan Smuts, the ex-South African Prime Minister, who actually coined the term *Holism* in his seminal book *Holism and Evolution* (1999 [first published in 1926]). He said:

> Th[e] character of "wholeness" meets us everywhere and points to something fundamental in the universe. Holism ...is the term here coined for this fundamental factor operative towards the creation of wholes in the universe. …wholes are not mere artificial constructs of thought. They point to something real in the universe. (1999, pp. 94-96)

Arthur Koestler also explored the concept of wholeness through psychology and evolution in his book *The Ghost in the Machine* (1967). Although it is not clear whether Koestler was aware of Smuts' work there are distinct synergies between the two, not least in the naming. Smuts apparently derived the term Holism from the Greek word *Holos* meaning 'whole' and *ism* meaning a system or practice (1999); while Koestler described the concept of an entity that is itself a whole and *simultaneously a part of some other whole*. He named these entities Holons, also "from the Greek *Holos*…with the suffix *on* which, as in proton or neutron, suggests a particle or part" (1967, p. 48). However, this could simply be an indication of the tendency in Western academia to refer to its Greek origins even when describing something new.

The underlying principle of Holism is that:

> …everything exists in relationship; in a context of connection and meaning—and that any change or event causes realignment, however, slight, throughout the entire pattern. [It] means that the whole is comprised of a *pattern of relationships* that are not contained by the parts but ultimately defines them [my emphasis]. (Miller, 2000c, p. 21)

This underlying principle essentially means that in order to gain greater understanding of the world and humanity's existence within it any single object, entity, relationship, event, experience or phenomenon should be considered in the broadest and deepest context possible. As early as 1926, Smuts wrote:

> The old concepts and formulas are no longer adequate to express our modern outlook. The old bottles will no longer hold the new wine. The spiritual temple of the future, while it will be built largely on old well-proved materials, will require new ampler foundations in the light of the immense extension of our intellectual horizons. (p. x)

The modern outlook Smuts refers to evolved from Einstein's *Special Theory of Relativity* (1905), his *General Theory of Relativity* (1915) and from the development of Quantum Mechanics, originally hypothesised by Max Planck in 1900 and developed into *Quantum Theory* in Copenhagen in 1927 (Capra, 1991; Peat, 1994; Zukav, 2001). The General Theory of Relativity abolished the absolute concepts of space and time that had held true, in the minds of scientists for centuries (Capra, 1991; Hawking, 1998, 2002) and Quantum Theory established that Newtonian physics does not apply at the sub-atomic level. Heisenberg's *Uncertainty Principle* (1927), a cornerstone of Quantum Theory holds that:

> …we cannot know both the position and momentum of a particle with absolute precision. We can know either of them precisely, but in that case, we can know nothing about the other. …Accordingly, quantum mechanics does not and cannot predict specific events. It does however, predict probabilities. Probabilities are the odds that something is going to happen, or that it is not going to happen. (Zukav, 2001, p. 29)

For the first time scientists began to talk in terms of probabilities rather then certainties accepting, at least to some degree, that mystery is inherent in the universe. Quantum Theory:

> …reveals a basic oneness of the universe. It shows that we cannot decompose the world into independently existing smaller units. As we penetrate into matter, nature does not show us any isolated 'basic building blocks', but rather appears as complicated web of relations between the various parts of the whole. (Capra, 1991, p. 78)

Seemingly then, Quantum Theory and what has generally become known as *New Physics*, is synergistic with the concept of Holism, both Quantum Theory and Holism were developed around the same time and Quantum Theory influenced Smuts as he was conceptualising his theory of Holism. Advances in New Physics continued throughout the twentieth century and by 1967 Koestler was saying "The citadel of orthodoxy which the sciences of life have been built…rests on a number of impressive pillars, some of which are beginning to show cracks" (p. 1). An interesting side note to these discoveries was the realisation by scientists that the language they employed was insufficient to deal with the concepts they were encountering now that the established laws and logic were discovered to be inadequate (Capra, 1991). The inadequacy of language to express aspects of humanity's existence has been a recurrent theme throughout this investigation.

Of course, Smuts was not the only person to be considering the notion of wholeness early in the twentieth century and physics was not the only science. For example, between the World Wars there was increased awareness of the work of the Gestalt psychologists in Germany (Vernon, 1971). The word Gestalt means *Form* (Vernon, 1971), or *Pattern* (Burns, 1995) and literally a "Gestalt is; *An organised whole that is perceived as more than the sum of its parts*" [my emphasis] (Soanes, 1990, p. 464). Gestalt psychology holds that perceptions and reactions, for example, are Gestalts in their own right. Koestler later referred to these Gestalts as functional, behavioural and what might be called ontological holons (1967). He not only applied the notion of holons to easily identifiable wholes such as the atom, the person, the Earth and the like. He also said:

> …more generally the term 'holon' may be applied to any stable biological or social sub-whole which displays rule-governed behaviour and/or structured Gestalt-constancy. Thus organelles and homologous organs are *evolutionary holons*; morphogenetic fields are *ontogenetic holons*; the ethologist's 'fixed action patterns' and the sub-routines of acquired skills are *behavioural holons*; phonemes, morphemes, words, phrases and linguistic holons; individuals, families, tribes, nations are *social holons* [my emphasis]. (1967, pp. 341-348)

At first glance Holism may be seen as an opposite epistemology to that inherent in the reductionist or mechanistic Western worldview which I discussed in Chapter one, however, Smuts (1999) cautioned against this perceived duality saying:

> ...mechanism and Holism are not necessarily opposed; that both ideas have their proper scope and sphere of usefulness, but…Holism is the more fundamental concept and in its most far-reaching reactions transforms, transcends and absorbs the concept of mechanism. (p. 162)

The concept of Holism not only establishes the existence of holons but also identifies, what might be described as, levels of wholeness (Miller, 2000c). Smuts calls this a "stratification of progressive series of wholes, stretching from the inorganic beginnings to the highest levels of spiritual creation" (1999, p. ix). Though intrigued and inspired by Einstein, Rutherford and Bohr and advances in New Physics particularly in the area of matter and energy/field and space/time, Smuts (1999) was clearly also interested in the role of Holism in the *evolution* of humanity. He proposed a detailed stratification which he summarised thus:

> Through all [the] stages [of stratification] we see the ever deepening nature of the whole as a specific structural synthesise of parts with inner activities of its own which co-operate and function in harmony, either naturally or instinctively or consciously. The parts so co-operate and co-function towards a definite inner end of purpose that together they

constitute and form a whole more or less of a distinctive character, with an identity and an ever-increasing measure of individuality of its own. (1999, p. 117)

Koestler, who was also interested in evolution, discussed stratification too, giving the world the concept of the *Holarchy* (1967) (mentioned in Chapter one); that is an order of, or the nested structure of, holons, a *natural hierarchy*, which provides an *increasing order of wholeness but not increasing importance or power*. Both Smuts and Koestler assert a natural hierarchy can be seen throughout nature, as well as at the microcosmic level. This concept is not unlike the actual entities of Alfred North Whitehead's *Philosophy of Organism* (1978), another philosopher working in the early twentieth century. However, as Koestler (and others) allude, there are many other levels of wholeness and as a result Holism overtly acknowledges and "integrates science *and spirituality* in an expanded framework of human experience" [my emphasis] (Gallegos Nava, 2001, p. 5). This is an integration which makes redundant the perceived duality which Smuts cautioned against (1999, p. 62) and which has since been repeated by others (Sloan, 1983). At its core Holism is the fundamental interconnectedness of *all* phenomena and within this fundamental interconnectedness not only is each entity, relationship, experience and phenomenon a holon or whole, in its own right, but all wholes are held together by a great unifying force. Smuts summed up this force as:

> …a great unifying creative tendency of a specific holistic character in the universe, operating through and sustaining the forces and activities of nature and life and mind and giving ever more of a distinctive holistic character to the universe. (1999, p. 117)

Koestler called the unifying force the integrative tendency, saying:

> ....it is inherent in the concept of hierarchic order and manifested on every level, from the symbiosis of organelles in the cell, to ecological communities and human societies. Every living holon has the dual tendency to preserve and assert its individuality, such as it is, but at the same time to function as an integrated part of an existing whole, or an evolving whole. (1967, p. 201)

Koestler provides a wide-ranging sixty-two point summary of what he calls Open Hierarchical Systems (Holarchies) in Appendix 1 of his book (1967). This work has more recently been summarised and reproduced by others (Gallegos Nava, 2001; Wilber, 2000a). However, the concept of the wholeness of the universe and the fundamental interconnectedness of all phenomena is continually being explored by scientists. Erwin Laszlo, for example recently described the "amazing coherence of the universe, of our body and our mind and the relation of our body-mind to the universe" (2006c, p. 23),

suggesting that if it is assumed that this observable coherence is not simply an "incomprehensible mystery" (p. 23) or the "inscrutable will of a transcendent Creator" (p. 23) that there must be another reason for it. He describes this coherence as the Akashic or A-Field (Laszlo, 2006a, 2006c, 2007, 2008b, 2006d; Laszlo & Currivan, 2008; Laszlo et al., 2003) after the fundamental element *Akasha* (meaning "all-pervasive space") in Hindu cosmology (the others being Earth, Fire, Water and Air). In Japanese spiritual/martial tradition this fundamental element is called *Kū* (no depth and no beginning, boundless, limitless, ultimate, infinity) (Lowry, 1995; Ochiai, 2005). Other modern scientists variously call it the psi field (Bache, 2008; Hollick, 2007), the vacuum-based holofield, the cosmic holofield (Laszlo, 2006c), the zero-point field or simply the field (McTaggart, 2008a).

Leaving the last word on the concept of Holism to Smuts. He said:

> Holism...comprises all wholes in the universe.

> It is both a concept and a factor: a concept as standing for all wholes, a factor because the wholes it denotes are the real factors in the universe. We speak of matter as including all particles of matter in the universe: in the same way we shall speak of Holism as including all wholes which are ultimate creative centres of reality in the world. (1999, p. 127)

Modern holistic education and holistic epistemologies

In Chapter two I discussed my emergent awareness of the wholeness/oneness of the universe and my affinity with the pedagogic approach which has become known as modern holistic education. For the sake of ease it is very tempting to say the concept of Holism emerged in the early twentieth century and developed over the next hundred years or so and that holistic education is the epistemology which emerged from that. Unfortunately that is not the case for at least three reasons. First, "in the history of European science, atomistic and holistic ways of thinking have alternated. Early scientific thinking was holistic but speculative; the modern scientific temper reacted by being empirical but atomistic" (Laszlo, 1996, p.16). Second, in non-Western epistemology holistic ways of knowing are the norm (Cajete, 1994; Capra, 1991; Nakagawa, 2000; Peat, 1994; Zukav, 2001). Third, in the Western educational tradition modern holistic education can trace its origins back to the work of the *Romantic*, *Transcendentalist* and *Progressive* educators of the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Dufty, 1994; Miller, 1998; Stack, 2001). Forbes (2003) describes the work of six authors whom he notes could

be seen as the originators of holistic approaches to Western education. These authors are Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Jung, Maslow and Rogers, although it should be noted that not all of each author's body of work is necessarily relevant to modern holistic educators (Forbes, 2003). Neither are these six the only writers to be considered influential in the development of pedagogy that could be described as holistic – Dewey, Steiner and Montessori are also often cited (Miller, 1998) as are Thoreau, Emerson and Alcott (Miller, 2002) and there are others who are less well-known. Marcel Jousse, a French educator, cosmologist and anthropologist working in the early to mid-twentieth century, Vasily Sukhomlinsky, a Russian educator, working in the middle third of the twentieth century and the influential philosopher and thinker, Jiddu Krishnamurti, are just three of many possible examples. There are also a number of other non-education-based, yet significant, contributions to the development of modern holistic education which can also be identified (Stack, 2001). These contributions include, but are not limited to, new physics, ecology, Indigenous wisdom, spirituality, cosmology, feminist thought and Eastern philosophy. However, for the last twenty years or so there has been a recognised, if niche, field within formal education which is described as *Holistic Education*. This field has largely been conceived by North American educators such as John P (Jack) Miller (1996) and Ron Miller (Miller, 2000a; 1991b).

So, whilst it cannot exactly be shown that modern holistic education is directly derivative of Smuts concept of Holism, or Koestler's notion of holons and holarchy, the idea that the universe is "made up of integrated wholes and cannot simply be reduced to the sum of its parts" (Miller, 1996, p. 17) has certainly been adopted by writers, thinkers and practitioners in the field of modern holistic education who describe this concept using the term *Holism*, and the term *Holistic Education* was *also* coined from the Greek word *Holos* for whole (Miller, 1996). It should be noted that in some circles there is a largely semantic debate between the use of the terms *Holistic* and *Wholistic* (Miller, 1996), although proponents of each are clear in their particular usage. In keeping with the holistic view of the universe, the diverse influences referred to above (Stack, 2001) should only be seen as a useful indication of the evolution of modern holistic education rather than a recipe for the individual ingredients that make it up. However, unless I am specifically referring to the field of modern holistic education and those writers, thinkers and practitioners associated with it, I prefer to refer to *holistic epistemologies* since I believe this descriptor allows for

the inclusion of a range of unique and diverse epistemological approaches and experiences whilst still being rooted in the cosmology of Holism.

The early authors referred to by Forbes earlier were the amongst the first to formally attempt to provide education which addressed "the fullest possible human development" (2003, p. 3), rather than narrow specialist knowledge which was then emerging as a requirement of the newly technologised and mechanised world. This work was carried forward by the so-called Progressives in the early twentieth century and has been the continued by generations of educators that might be described as holistic, ever since. That being the case, one may ask if writers, thinkers and practitioners have been attempting to meet this goal for approximately the same amount of time as the modern Western worldview has existed. Why then is modern Western education still judged as inadequate by those same writers, thinkers and practitioners? This is a question I explored through the collaborative conversation phase of this investigation that is described in Chapters seven and eight. However, it appears that:

> …for a long time many of us have been aware of something basically wrong in our lives, but have found it extremely difficult to do much about it since we could not even name it or clearly visualise another way of being. Indeed, most of what has been taught to us in history seemed to indicate there was no other way. That has been the underlying assumption and we all take our basic assumptions for granted, no matter how limiting and destructive they may be. (Eisler & Loye, 1998, p. 1)

Krishnamurti describes these basic cultural assumptions as *conditioning*. He says:

> …we are conditioned – physically nervously, mentally – by the climate we live in and the food we eat, by the culture in which we live, by the whole of our social, religious and economic environment, by our experience, by education and by family pressures and influences. All these are the factors which condition us. Our conscious and unconscious responses to all the challenges of our environment-intellectual, emotional, outward and inward-all these are the action of conditioning. Language is conditioning, all thought is the action, the response of conditioning. (2000b, pp. 149-150)

Eight orientations

I previously noted that this document explores the interconnected universe and the roles and responsibilities which the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of the meta-narratives explored appear to ascribe to humanity within that interconnected universe. This investigation involved extensive immersion in texts and the use of a manual, intuitive, informal, reflective and iterative approach to distil similar or common themes

discernable within Holism and within holistic epistemologies based on my experience with the texts. I describe these common themes as eight observable orientations and the process of extrapolating these eight orientations is described in Chapter seven. I should make clear that the delineation of these orientations is used for explanatory purposes only, holistic epistemologies are based on the full development of whole human beings within the widest possible contexts of their existence.

Cosmology and spirituality

The cosmology of Holism and holistic epistemologies, like the interconnected universe itself, is paradoxically very simple and yet extremely complex. It cannot really be adequately discussed since it encompasses that which is known, that which is unknown and that which can never be known. It must be experienced and it can never really be fully understood by cognitive means alone. As people experience an expanding and shifting of their consciousness they can become more open to its significance, but they can never fully conceptualise the enormity and complexity of it using the tools of intellect or intelligence even in conjunction with their senses. Being immersed in this cosmology is the intuitive, sensual, synergistic, experiential, embodied and timeless engagement of the individual with the trans-dimensional, trans-contextual and trans-temporal universe.

This cosmology is one where the universe is an interconnected and interrelated holarchy and human beings are spiritual beings naturally in tune with it (Skolimowski, 1994; Teilhard de Chardin, 2002). It leads holistic educators to work not from the part-to-whole, or even from the whole-to-part, but from the whole *and* the part simultaneously and inclusively within the widest possible context. This cosmology is rooted in spirituality rather than the structure and ritual of institutional religion. It is rooted in the "experience of wholeness, a total and direct experience of inner peace, love and universal brotherhood [sic], permitting the natural unfolding and enfolding of human values. Spirituality is the absolute context…" (Gallegos Nava, 2001, p. 32). Such a cosmology is transcendent and participatory; it does not simply represent wholeness on one end of a continuum and reductionism on the other. The transcendent nature of this cosmology is such that it privileges neither structure nor content but rather it inspires balance and harmony, mutuality and reciprocity, consensus and diversity, feeling and *Seeing* (see Krishnamurti, 1994a, p. 28), *Being, Doing* and *Becoming*; wisdom, insight and praxis, *Awe* and wonder; meaning and patterns, complexity and simplicity, unity and diversity, structure and

content, engagement and reflection, caring and compassion, empathy and imagination, vision and focus, and service and responsibility.

Nature

The relationship between nature and Holism is self-evident. Holism is rooted in the concept of the interconnected and interrelated universe where all entities, relationships, experiences and phenomena exist as holons within the holarchy that is the universe. Nature is one of the most visible examples of this holarchy. However, the relationship between nature and holistic epistemologies is more complex. First, writers, thinkers and practitioners in modern holistic education tend to believe that the Western worldview and the institutionalised education that supports it is responsible for the fragmentation or breakdown in the relationship between humanity and the Earth and, therefore, is at least partially, responsible for the environmental degradation, natural disasters and extinction of numerous species of unique life that occurs every year, as discussed in Chapter one. For example:

> ...*fragmentation* [caused by the Western worldview] permeates everything. First, we have *divided* economic life from the surrounding environment and the result has been ecological devastation. The air we breathe and the water we drink are often foul. We seem to have poisoned everything, including the vast expanses of the oceans, because we see ourselves as *separate* from the organic processes that surround us [my emphasis]. (Miller, 1996, p. 1)

Second, the influences on modern holistic education are diverse, as discussed earlier (Stack, 2001), and a number of these influences are traditionally rooted in nature, in its broadest sense. There are also writers, thinkers and practitioners who have influenced modern holistic education who had a particular focus on nature in their work.

Third, the cosmology which underpins holistic epistemologies is one of interconnectedness and interrelatedness. For example:

> ...[it] attempt[s] to bring education into alignment with the fundamental realities of nature. Nature at its core is *interrelated* and dynamic. We can see this dynamism and *connectedness* in the atom, organic systems and biosphere and the universe itself [my emphasis]. (Miller, 1996, p. 1)

This naturally includes everything in the universe, both animate and seemingly non-animate, including *that which is currently known, that which is currently unknown*

and that which can never be known, accepting that knowing is limited by the collective experiences of humanity to that point.

Finally, in practice, writers, thinkers and practitioners of holistic epistemologies often use nature, either actually or metaphorically, as the classroom, believing that "human life is fulfilling and meaningful only when we experience ourselves as being connected to the world" (Miller, 2000e, p. 67). Some even use nature as a metaphor for the educational experience, for example Sukhomlinsky who said:

> Studies are just one of the petals of that flower which we call education in the wider sense. In education there is nothing major or minor, just as there is no main petal among many petals which create the beauty of a flower. In education everything is important-the lessons, the development of diverse interests outside lessons and the relationships between the students and the group. (1979-1981, p.13)

As was noted above, holistic epistemologies engage the whole person within the whole (widest possible) context of their existence. This means it is impossible to separate the person from their environment and that means not just their immediate environment but their whole context including the holon and holarchy of the Earth. One cannot consider the individual without considering the relationships that individual has with the Earth, the affect those relationships have on the balance and harmony of the Earth, and ultimately the affect they have on the balance and harmony of the universe. This relationship is inherently spiritual (Skolimowski, 1994; Teilhard de Chardin, 2002) and therefore holistic epistemologies are inherently ecological, sustainable and participatory, in that they focus on how the universe fits together, how each part acts and interacts on and with each other, and how humanity fits in that ongoing and dynamic balancing.

Contemplative practice

In the context of Holism and holistic epistemologies, contemplative practice does not have to be formal, institutionalised or ritualised meditation and it does not have to follow a prescribed path. Contemplative practice is simply any activity that allows the "merging of subject and object" (Miller, 1994, p. vii). That is, removing fragmentation and allowing the practitioner to *See* (see Krishnamurti, 1994a, p. 28) or "envision[ing] the whole [and] restor[ing] the balance between part and whole" (Miller, 1994, p. vii). Contemplative practice allows the practitioner to still their mind and free themselves from conditioning allowing them to experience authentic relationships with their family, their community and

the myriad of other contexts they exist within. This authenticity allows the practitioner to live a "life of purpose, joy and compassion. It allows [them] to examine what is really important in life so that [they] are not pulled into pointless activity that tends to fragment and deaden [their] being" (Miller, 1994, p. 147). It transcends the fragmentation that is caused by the Western worldview and that appears to create the duality of self and Self, of self and Other, of self and community, of self and Earth and a myriad of other dichotomous situations humanity finds itself existing within including the duality of domains of knowledge (Miller, 1994).

The contemplative practice of Holism and holistic epistemologies transcends the formalised, cultish, fundamentalist, institutionalised, hierarchical, authoritarian, controlling and directive aspects that can be observed in some spiritual or transpersonal traditions (Heron, 1998). For the writers, thinkers and practitioners in holistic education contemplative practice can take different forms. For some it might be through practice in such traditions as Hatha Yoga, T'ai Chi Chuan, other martial arts or meditation while for others it might be walking, gardening, listening to (or playing) music, art or working with their hands, and for others it might be sports, or any other activity where they are "attentive to the smallest detail…[where]…we experience time and space differently" (Miller, 1994, p. vii).

This transcendence is not simply seeing past the duality referred to above it is experiencing what I describe as *Shifts in Consciousness*. That is so-called a-ha moments, peak experiences, or moments of clarity when a person becomes aware of the holarchical nature of existence and their part in that existence. I call these moments *Instances of Wholeness* because they are invariably relatively brief and because they act like portals to an existence beyond the context created by the worldview a person inhabits. In the same way that a person, as Heraclitus noted (Plato, 2006), can never step in the same river twice because between the first time they step into the river and the second time both the river and the person have changed, a person cannot recreate an *Instance of Wholeness* that they have already experienced. However, it is possible to create the conditions where the experience of an *Instance of Wholeness* is possible (conversation with London, 2007).

In a general sense *Instances of Wholeness* allow a person to gain:

- a deep understanding of the Self (oneness),
- a deep understanding of their connection with and place in, their community (common oneness),
- a deep understanding of their connection with and place in, their immediate and wider context (common oneness), and
- a deep understanding of their connection with and place in the great mystery of the known universe and beyond (universal oneness).

Contemplative practice is a key orientation in holistic epistemologies and a number of the influences on modern holistic education originate in the contemplative traditions (Stack, 2001). As such, a number of the writers, thinkers and practitioners who have influenced modern holistic education refer to contemplative practice in their work and utilise a range of practices to engage the whole person in the epistemological experience.

Myth, story and legend

Myth, story, legends and other aesthetic aspects of culture allow communities, cultures and societies to transmit the true breadth and depth of their uniqueness from one generation to another in a way that is trans-dimensional, trans-contextual and trans-temporal. They have a strong spiritual dimension and they allow individuals, communities and societies to connect in a sensual and experiential manner with the holarchy of the universe by emphasising the balance, harmony and mystery of that holarchy whilst still allowing for the possibility of chaos (Laszlo, 2006b; Peat & Briggs, 1999). They also emphasise the holarchical responsibility of a virtuous existence (Jacobs & Jacobs-Spencer, 2001; Oliver & Gershman, 1989).

In holistic epistemologies myth, story and legend are used much as they have been for millennia – to teach. They engage the listener in the important lessons of life, transmit the values and ethics of their culture and they provide deep connection to the physical, spiritual and temporal place where their culture is situated, to all other entities and to the universe. Myth, story and legend literally touch people's souls. Each person's emotions and senses are engaged as each iteration is a uniquely recreated for each audience, context and juncture. The use of myth, story and legend encourages the self-development and increases the self-esteem of the teller and the listeners, as well as enhancing the

communication skills of all. These skills are not simply in verbal delivery but in the performance of a whole-person activity, they involve, what Jousse would call, gestualism,. geste being "the observable expression of the inner activity" (1931, p. 34). He believed that geste is the manifestation of embodied knowledge and that the teller is *living* the story as they tell it. The integration of all aspects of a person's being with the information, (in this case myth, story or legend) in order to share it with another, makes the whole experience very powerful. The power of myth, story or legend in holistic epistemologies is *embodiment* that is, the "seamless…[integration of] thinking, being, doing and interacting" (Hocking, Haskell, & Linds, 2001a, p. xviii). Embodiment is a flow experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) and ensures that humanity "view knowing and knowledge not as concrete things that reside in the body or mind but [as something] that emerge [s] through interactions with/in the world" (Hocking et al., 2001a, p. xvii).

Aesthetics

For the purpose of this document the term aesthetics incorporates art, music, performance, story-telling, poetry and dance originating from the Greek *aisthesthai* meaning "perceive" (Soanes, 1990, p. 16). In this context aesthetic arts are inherently creative and communicative and "creativity is an inner fire that stokes the passion of self-growth and offers us a shared and sharable language" (Colalillo Kates, 2005, p. 193). Aesthetics, like story-telling, engage both the creator and the observer in an embodied experience and as such this engagement can also be a flow experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), so much so, that it would be more appropriate to refer to both parties as co-experiencers of an embodied aesthetic process. Just as myths, stories and legends engage humanity at many levels and provide a deep connection with the holarchy of the universe, so do aesthetics. As with the other orientations, aesthetics have an inherently spiritual dimension since they allow the opportunity for contemplative practice and to connect with and reflect on the practitioner's and culture's cosmology. When this is achieved the practitioner is definitely in flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Aesthetic arts are often used as a medium for learning in holistic epistemologies simply because they encompass the embodiment, experience and representation of knowledge. The use of aesthetics recognises the holarchical nature of all existence, connecting the whole person with their community, their place, the Earth and the universe through embodiment, spirituality and cosmology. Again it is possible to discern several of the

influences on modern holistic education (Stack, 2001) that have rich aesthetic traditions and several of the writers, thinkers and practitioners who have been influential in what has become modern holistic education utilise aesthetics extensively in their work.

Learning

Human beings are continually learning from individual and shared experiences and individual and collective reflection on those experiences. Recently however, work by scientists has shown that the universe itself might learn and that this inherent ability is actually observable at all levels of the holarchy including at the level of cosmic, pure, or shared consciousness (Bache, 2008; Hollick, 2007; Laszlo, 2006c, 2007, 2008b, 2006d; Laszlo & Currivan, 2008; Laszlo et al., 2003; McTaggart, 2008a; Talbot, 1991). Indeed this concept is not entirely new in philosophical or cosmological circles reflecting the complete integration of consciousness into the holarchy of the universe, a concept that Teillard de Chardin called the *Noosphere* (2002). However, this recent *scientific* revelation bridges the gap between the creationist and evolutionist approaches to the evolution of the universe since it holds that each time the universe recreates itself it 'remembers' aspects of its existence from before, accessing a "storehouse of information–templates from prior universes…[thus] explaining [the] mysterious emergence of order and structure from the apparent chaos" (de Quincey, 2006, p. 110). This theory allows for the previously unexplainable evolution of such things as flying reptiles that the trial and error of natural selection cannot apparently account for (Laszlo, 2006a, 2007).

So, if learning is inherent within the holarchy of the universe and therefore Holism, it is not surprising holistic epistemologies are rooted in that same epistemological holarchy. The aim of holistic epistemologies is to "nurture[e] healthy, whole, curious persons who can learn whatever they need to know in any new context" (Miller, 1991a, p. 7). Whilst it might be assumed that was the aim of any educational paradigm, holistic epistemologies "… seek to enable the wholeness of the human being to emerge and develop as fully as possible" (Miller, 2000f, p. 2). Such wholeness cannot be developed without the acknowledgement and appreciation of the relationships that are inherent in humanity's holarchical existence (Miller, 1996). The learning orientation in Holism, described in this document as holistic epistemology, is rooted simply in the widest context of humanity's holarchical existence where connections and relationships are explored exponentially. Meaning emerges in the widest possible context through the experience of and engagement

in, authentic relationships and through the reflection on those experiences, engagements and relationships. This epistemology, rather that being rooted in the cognitive capacity of the individual, is rooted in the spiritual connections between the individuals and the multiple contexts they exist within. It is an epistemology that is inherently creative. Holistic educators seek to serve "the evolution of the cosmos toward greater order, wholeness and meaning…[through the] open[ing] and deep[ening] of [humanity's] consciousness" (Miller, 2000b, p. 14).

Leadership and community

Holism reflects the interconnectedness of all entities in the holarchy of the universe and beyond. This is an inherent acceptance of the notion of oneness, the oneness of the whole individual, the common oneness of community (Bopp & Bopp, 2001), and the universal oneness of the universe and beyond. As such, community and Holism are inseparable. Also inherent in Holism are the concepts of mutuality, reciprocity, respect, balance and harmony. At an individual, familial, communal, societal and global level these concepts are reflected as virtues that the individual, family, community, society and world embody. These virtues are reflected in the leadership which is demonstrated at every level of the human holarchy from the individual outwards; that is, leadership which demonstrates a commitment to the service of something bigger than one's self and one's selfish interests, and leadership which reflects the roles and responsibilities humanity has within the holarchy of the universe.

The nature of discourse around Holism and modern holistic education is such that there is not much literature that is specifically written about *holistic leadership* per se. The notable exceptions to this are discussions around the role of holistic educators or principals (Gallegos Nava, 2001; Miller, 1996) and Molinaro's work on holistic leadership (1999) that I referred to in Chapter two. This type of leadership has been variously described in organisational behaviour circles (Owens, 1998) as *transformational* leadership (Burns, 1978), as *moral* leadership (Sergiovanni, 1992) or as *servant* leadership (Greenleaf, 2003a; Naisbett & Aburdene, 1985). It has also been described as *living* leadership (Schmidt, 2007) or *visionary* leadership (McLaughlin & Davidson, 2008), although I have tended to follow Molinaro (1999) and describe this phenomenon as *Holistic Leadership*. Holistic leaders seek to build organisations, schools or communities which are spiritually rich and socially responsible. They view their organisation, community or society as a complex

living whole that is evolving, unfolding and enfolding through a sense of purpose, collaboration and a deep sense of inner direction (adapted from Miller, 1996). Holistic leaders facilitate this sense of purpose, collaboration and inner direction and "inspire through respect, integrity and trust" (Molinaro, 1999, p. 13). They acknowledge that holistic organisations need people who bring their whole selves to their work. Holistic organisations need people who view the individuals within the organisation, the organisation itself, the community the organisation is situated within, the society the community is situated within, and the environment the society is situated within as all being both wholes in and of themselves (holons) and yet part of a holarchy that is the Earth. They also need people who acknowledge that the Earth is a holon in the holarchy of the universe. Holistic leaders take their responsibility to create and support these organisations seriously and work on many levels simultaneously. In order to undertake such work the holistic leader is conscious of their inner life and their connection to all other entities, relationships, experiences and phenomena and they seek to *engage* fully in *authentic* relationships which are spiritually vital. The holistic leader:

> …has a vision of [a] holistic [organisation]…and attempts to live out this vision in her [sic] actions. If the [leader] is able to do this to any degree, it is a powerful facilitator for [collegial] growth. The deeper the integration between thought and action, the more powerful the effect on [organisational community]. The vision should provide a sense of direction for the [organisation] and be open enough so that [all] can share in the vision and contribute to its development. (Miller, 1996, p. 183)

Holistic epistemologies reflect common oneness, including through the establishment of authentic relationships with the community, wider society and environment within which the epistemology is situated. They are transcendent yet inclusive. They encompass the thorough integration of knowledge, experience and context where all life is considered sacred and learning is expressed through joyful creativity. They:

> …see people as sociable and community-oriented by nature. Living with others is another integral part both of an individual's development and of the educational strategy. Sociability is stimulated through cooperative actions and teamwork. A sense is developed that there is a community of learning, whose members have a responsibility towards the local and global community. (Gallegos Nava, 2001, p. 62)

Physical activity

Physical activity as an orientation in holistic epistemologies can refer to a full range of activities. Some people engage in obviously contemplative practices including those

mentioned earlier. Others prefer to engage in activities which allow them unmediated communing with nature such as hiking, climbing, swimming, canoeing, gardening, or flower arranging and so on. Yet others prefer, for example, to engage in more vocationally-oriented activities such as physical work, community service, caring for others, environmental regeneration and reclamation and volunteering. Which activity is undertaken is almost irrelevant. What is important is the manner in which it is undertaken and that the activity should contribute to their overall development as a human being.

Holistic epistemologies are embodied. They are rooted in the *experience* of *Doing. Doing* allows a sensual experience rather than an intellectual one and physical activity helps cultivate the all-round well-being of the person. There are two expectations of this kind of physical activity. First, it is undertaken in a *mindful* way, where the person is *fully present* in the activity, truly *in the moment*, absorbed, immersed and as one with the experience; where the person is likely to be experiencing flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Second, it has an opportunity for learning and the person would be open to whatever learning the situation provides. This learning can also take the form of self-knowing, such as through increasing the breadth and depth of knowledge regarding the context the person exists within, or the expanding, or shifting, of a person's consciousness. This kind of learning would be described as transformative. Learning is also necessary in order to experience flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). However, whatever form of physical activity is undertaken the act of doing the activity will increase the person's awareness of and connection to, the holarchical and holographic universe rather than simply skill enhancement or abstract knowledge acquisition. In this way physical activity provides an experiential and sensual connection to the holarchy of the universe. Such activity can take many forms, each providing different sensual experiences and comprising both intellectual and creative dimensions, as well as the obvious physical dimension. Generally speaking activities are developed over an extended period of time and will likely, but not always, be undertaken with others. Finally, in holistic epistemologies no activity, physical or otherwise, would be undertaken to the exclusion of all others, since balance is very important (adapted from Cockerill, 1999, pp. 85-91).

Summary

In this chapter I explored the meta-narrative of Holism, including its relationship with the so-called *New Physics* of the twentieth century and the concept of wholeness or oneness

which is a common theme running through this document. I also briefly discussed the origins of and key aspects of, formal *Holistic Education*. Having established this epistemological background I then highlighted the eight observable orientations which emerged from my immersion in the texts of Holism and holistic epistemologies.

Chapter four – Indigenous cultures

Overview

In this chapter, I move on to Indigenous cultures, the second meta-narrative discussed in this section. Having established the background I then go on to highlight the eight observable orientations which I see emerging from the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of Indigenous cultures. In this document I have chosen to use the terms *Indigenous* and *Indigenous knowledge* unless a different term specifically applies to the example to which I am referring. I have also chosen to capitalise all of this type of nomenclature as a sign of respect for the ancient cultures which are inherent therein (Four Arrows [Don Trent Jacobs], 2006), however, where third party quotes are used the author's terminology is not altered.

Just to clarify its origins:

> The word "Indigenous" is derived from the Latin root *indu* or *endo* that is related to the Greek word, *endina* meaning 'entrails'. Indigenous means being so completely identified with a place that you reflect its very entrails, its soul [author's emphasis]. (Cajete, 1999a, p. 6)

My use of the term *Indigenous* indicates a people or culture which has a "long-term occupancy of [and deep spiritual connection to] a place. [A people where] traditional norms, social values and mental constructs guide, organise and regulate [their] ways of living in and making sense of the world" (G. J Sefa Dei, 2000, p. 72). These may or may not be universally identified as First Peoples. Following on from that, my understanding of *Indigenous knowledge* as a concept comes from Roberts who says it is knowledge that is "…accumulated by a group of people, not necessarily Indigenous, who by centuries of unbroken residence develop an in-depth understanding of their particular place in their particular world" (1998, p. 59). It should be noted however, Robert's use of the term Indigenous here (referring to people) relates to First Peoples, so he is essentially saying Indigenous knowledge may also be constructed by those not typically identified as being First Peoples. My understanding has also been informed by Sefa Dei, Hall and Rosenberg who say:

> Indigenous knowledges are understood to be the commonsense ideas and cultural knowledges of local peoples concerning the everyday realities of living. They encompass

the cultural traditions, values, belief systems and worldviews that, in any Indigenous society, are imparted to the younger generation by community Elders. They also refer to worldviews that are products of a direct experience of nature and its relationship with the social world. (2000, p. i)

Finally, I am not suggesting that all societies that may be identified as Indigenous, Aboriginal, Original or First Peoples are the same and can, therefore, necessarily be grouped together to be considered as a homogenised whole. Nor am I advocating or attempting the commodification of Indigenous knowledge by the Western academy. However, I am suggesting that from my investigation I have again identified themes which appear to be common within and between Indigenous cultures and that these commonalities may be grouped together for discussion (for example see Cajete, 1994, 2000, 1999b; Kulchyski, McCaskill, & Newhouse, 1999; George J Sefa Dei et al., 2000; Waters, 2004b).

The terms Indigenous knowledge, Indigenous wisdom and Indigenous culture are increasingly being discussed in academic literature, however, their usage is often confusing. Sometimes the terms are used generically, sometimes interchangeably and sometimes they are used specifically to mean particular behavioural or cultural aspects of a specific Indigenous culture or society. This lack of clarity is exacerbated by the relatively low (although increasing) numbers of Indigenous writers, thinkers and practitioners within the academy who produce work in this area compared to those who are non-Indigenous (Waters, 2004b). This confusion is also compounded by the interpretations that some Indigenous writers themselves apply to the practices, customs and experiences of Indigenous peoples (Four Arrows [Don Trent Jacobs], 2006). Vine Deloria Jr notes, for example, that "…things "Indian" have become more fantasy than real. Indian life, culture, religion and beliefs have become so bastardised that we have Indians interpreting their traditions as if they had a missionary purpose" (2004, p. 5). He says there is a range of conflicting claims emerging from Indigenous people in North America and if these claims are all accurate, it would mean:

> …that thousands of nuns dressed in their traditional penguin costumes roamed the West in an effort to stamp out Indian languages and that at the same time all the Indian children were being hidden by traditional Elders in obscure box canyons where they performed traditional ceremonies 24 hours a day". (p. 5)

He concludes "it is exceedingly difficult for this generation of people of Indian descent to intelligently work their way through this politically charged morass" (Deloria Jr, 2004, p.

5). There is no reason to assume that this difficulty and complexity does not apply to Indigenous peoples from other continents given their similar experiences of colonisation, residential schools, genocide and removal from tradition, language, land, practices and communities.

This complexity does not affect just the discussion of Indigenous knowledge, wisdom and culture in academic literature, although it is very evident there, but it also affects, for example, how Indigenous peoples and cultures are identified within the wider social milieu. Are they Original Peoples, First Peoples, Indigenous People, Aboriginal People, Native People, or Indian People? Should they actually be described by their Tribal, Family, or Clan name, or some combination thereof, depending on the circumstance? Within the literature any single work can use a range of terminology, sometimes generically, sometimes interchangeably and sometimes specifically. This is especially common in literature where direct quotes or transcripts of interviews with Indigenous people are used where there is often little consistency in the nomenclature used between the interviewees even where they originate in the same culture, no doubt for the reasons outlined above (Deloria Jr, 2004). Of course, complexity around culture and existence does not only apply to people from cultures that might be described as Indigenous. I, just like most people, could be described in a number of ways depending on the heritage and life experience that was being highlighted though, generally speaking, the cultural distinctions noted here have all but disappeared from much that is observable in Anglo-centric cultures. However, they are still very important in Indigenous cultures and something as seemingly simple as how an individual, community, society or culture is described conveys a deep and timeless connection to all levels of the holarchies that they, their ancestors and their descendents inhabit.

Eight orientations

As I noted earlier, the aim of this chapter is to explore the common themes that can be discerned within and across Indigenous cultures. I have again described these common themes as eight observable orientations and I describe the process of extrapolating these eight orientations from my immersion in the texts in Chapter seven. Again I should make clear that the delineation of these orientations is used for explanatory purposes only and in practice Indigenous cultures address the whole person within the whole context of their existence at all times.

Cosmology and spirituality

My understanding of cosmology is that it encompasses "all fields of knowing…[all the] various domains of the universe…[and all the] appropriate relationships between humans and the natural world [and] between humans and other humans" (Oliver & Gershman, 1989, pp. 55-57). This is equally true of the cosmology of Indigenous cultures. These cosmologies are largely grounded in sacred cycles, celestial observations, celebrations, initiations, rites of passage and rites of renewal (Cajete, 2004), meaning they are rooted in metaphysics bringing together all that has ever been, all that is and all that ever will be in an endless trans-dimensional, trans-contextual and trans-temporal holarchy. These cosmologies are continually manifested and embodied through "philosophy, art, agriculture, ritual, ceremony, technology, astronomy, farming, plant domestication, plant medicine, hunting, fishing, metallurgy and geology" (Waters, 2004a, p. xxi); essentially every aspect of individual, communal, spiritual and societal life. Most importantly though, Indigenous cosmologies manifest themselves in the *virtues* that Indigenous people typically embody (Cajete, 2004; Jacobs, 1998; Jacobs & Jacobs-Spencer, 2001).

Indigenous people see the universe as constantly unfolding, enfolding and evolving and see themselves as integral, active and creative participants in that evolution (Cajete, 2004). It is through this participation that Indigenous cosmologies thoroughly integrate the people with all levels of the holarchies that they exist within through the "knowledge and truth gained from interaction of body, mind, soul and spirit with all aspects of Nature" (Cajete, 2004, p. 46) participation that is enabled by their cosmology. The use of the capitalised Nature here can be understood to be the natural world or the universe, essentially it can be understood to be the complete holarchy of which they are part. This participation also provides an axiological basis of mutuality and reciprocity that has allowed Indigenous people generally speaking, to actively maintain for millennia the natural balance and harmony of the complexity of holarchies they exist within. Most importantly, Indigenous cosmologies also link the people to the wisdom, insight and praxis of their culture. "Knowledge is an extension of the cosmic order and comprises the accumulated wisdom of the group since time immemorial handed down from generation to generation" (Gostin & Chong, 1998, p. 147). In some Indigenous cultures this knowledge, as an extension of the cosmic order, has resulted in the culture's development of complex astronomical calculations which are observable through buildings precisely aligned to certain celestial events (Cajete, 1994, 2000; Peat, 1994).

Nature

As with the relationship between Holism and nature, the relationship between Indigenous people and nature is both self-evident and complex. For example "Hawai'ians…do not separate themselves from the environment. We are one, one and the same and we need each other and depend on each other and have this interrelationship with our environment" (Holmes, 2000, p. 41). In the African worldview humans are considered to be "…a weak link in the vast chain of nature, which encompassed the many animals, plants, birds, insects and worms and indeed non-animate things such as stones and rocks" (Wangoola, 2000, p. 265). In India, the Ayurveda (the Indigenous health knowledge) "arises from a worldview where the starting point is the universe" and is based on the notion that "living in harmony with other beings is…essential" (Shroff, 2000, pp. 215-226). Each of these unique worldviews articulates the concept of the interconnectedness and interrelatedness of every entity, relationship, experience and phenomenon – every holon in the holarchy of the universe. However, as Wangoola notes (above) this interconnectedness and interrelatedness does not just include entities which, in the West, might be described as animate. It also includes those which are seemingly non-animate such as geological or natural features including mountain ranges, forests, rivers, caves and waterholes for example.

The trans-dimensional, trans-contextual and trans-temporal nature of Indigenous cosmologies means that it is possible, for example, for a river which serves the community to have actually been created by the Rainbow Snake uprooting trees and carving a path for the rivers to flow to the sea (Reed, 1997). Just as it is possible for the rock, Mukara-so, to actually be the axe of one of the Ainu Gods which made the island of Yezo in Japan (Batchelor, 1892). It also means that Indigenous people inherently acknowledge that all entities and phenomena have some kind of consciousness that the people connect with as a matter of course through their relationships and experiences, and through the cultural forms they develop (Holmes, 2000). This acknowledgement of universal consciousness requires that the people ask permission of the plant or animal, for example, before taking it for their own needs, and afterwards to give thanks for the sacrifice that plant or animal made for the well-being of the people. "The guiding sentiment was respect. The central intent revolved around honouring the entities that gave life to a people" (Cajete, 1999b, p. 8). The essence of this intent can be seen in the "metaphoric construct of the 'hunter of good heart'" (Cajete, 1999b, p. 9). The relationship between Indigenous people and nature

is representative of the mutuality and reciprocity that is inherent in Indigenous cosmologies. North American Indigenous people, the Lakota, sum up this relationship in the expression *Mitakuye Oyasin*, or *All Our Relations* (Cajete, 1994; Looking Horse, 2001). This expression (and its associated concept) is an epistemological, ontological, axiological, rhetorical and methodological holon common, at least in essence, to Indigenous cultures worldwide.

Contemplative practice

As in the context of Holism and holistic epistemologies, contemplative practice as it relates to Indigenous cultures should not necessarily be understood as formal, or institutionalised, or ritualised meditation, and again it does not have to, but could, follow a prescribed path. Indigenous cultures essentially coexist within and co-create a universe that is not only interconnected but is also conscious, where people are spiritually connected to the holarchies they exist within and everything is "alive with…spiritual potential" (Harris, 1990, p. 23). For Indigenous cultures the immediate physical holarchy of which they are part is simultaneously and non-relativistically interconnected with the epistemological, ontological, axiological, rhetorical and methodological holons and holarchies that the individual, family, community and society exist within. This coexistence with the holarchical and conscious universe inherently facilitates the "merging of subject and object" (Miller, 1994, p. vii) noted earlier.

However, it is important to note that although this coexistence is inherent it is not passive it is active. As such, maintaining and enriching this coexistence requires the person to be fully 'present'. Presence is a kind of mindfulness (noted earlier), where each person is fully engaged with the holarchy they exist within through each relationship, each interaction and each experience in which they engage. As with anyone, presence or mindfulness requires concentration, practise and discipline, however, these attributes are inherent in the epistemological, the ontological, the axiological, the rhetorical and methodological holons of Indigenous people and therefore the practise of them is *fully integrated* into each person's, family's, community's or society's daily existence.

For Indigenous cultures contemplative practice is largely synonymous with living. It allows them to develop and maintain relationships with the universe which are so deep, that the people often have the ability to actually connect and communicate with all other

entities in the universe. A communication which is beyond words (Jacobs, 1998) and largely beyond rational understanding even though modern scientists continue to explore the notion of transpersonal consciousness (Bohm, 1980; Cousins, 2006; Laszlo, 2007, 2008b; Laszlo & Currivan, 2008; Laszlo et al., 2003; McTaggart, 2008a; Talbot, 1991; Wilber, 1982b). However, it is also the case that under certain circumstances these practices could also be enhanced through specific ceremonies, rituals or other embodied aesthetic practices such as dance, drumming or singing, and occasionally through the use of physical endurance, sleep deprivation, manipulated environments (such as the Sweat Lodge) and the ingestion of psychotropic plants (Jacobs, 1998; Kalweit, 2000).

Myth, story and legend

In Indigenous cultures, knowledge may be *gained* in a number of ways, however, the *transmission* of knowledge is intimately intertwined with language and aesthetics (Amery & Edwards, 1998). This transmission manifests through telling of myths, stories and legends as well as the singing of songs and participation in dances and ceremonies. "Story-telling is an ancient profession and these stories are amongst our oldest possessions. …They were our books, our literature and the memories of the storytellers were the leaves upon which they were written" (Humishuma, 1990, p. 305).

The usage of myths, stories and legends in Indigenous cultures is broad. In general however, they are used as "vehicles to preserve, carry and teach historical events, religious beliefs, ethics and values to young and old" (Erdoes & Ortiz, 1984, p. 1). "Through the extensive use of oral tradition, ritual and ceremony, Indian people established and maintained a dynamic participation with the natural world that deeply informed the meanings and understandings they had about themselves as a particular kind of people" (Cajete, 1994, p. 90). The telling of a myth, story, or legend will often be prompted by an identifiable event or need. These events or needs lead storytellers to adapt established stories to fit the particular circumstances that prompted its telling, or to add their own personal perspective if they are relating a story of an event at which they were present. The rationale for this can be discerned from Benedict who says "I would say when you search after truth, truth is *that which you will find that is dependable and is of use to you*" [my emphasis] (1999, p. 95), and Holmes who says "In…stories knowledge is validated not through the notion of 'truth value' but rather through connection. The memories passed down through connection are inviolable" (2000, p. 43). The connection being referred to is

the connection between the storyteller and previous generations, the storyteller and the place, and the storyteller and the listener – essentially the connection between the storyteller and the entire holarchy of which they are part. This connection is also a powerful catalyst in Indigenous people's reinforcement of self-identity and self-determination (collaborative conversation with Cooper, 2006). Therefore, this practice of adapting myths, stories, or legends does not detract from, or trivialise the message or relevance of the story, but reinforces it through contextualisation and association. However, it does mean that there are essentially two kinds of story. The first are the strict culturally significant stories which are delivered in formalised settings to limited audiences by high-level Elders. These stories are generally related to traditional knowledge, rites, rituals, initiations, or migration stories. The second are the more everyday stories, used as an exemplar of virtues, social behaviour or ethics, to rationalise or demystify occurrences, or to pass on everyday knowledge needed for survival. In both cases, it is clear storytelling is an important and integral part of Indigenous life and cultures as well a vehicle to transfer knowledge and connect the people to the "storehouse of information templates" (de Quincey, 2006, p. 110) which their holarchical and holographic existence provides.

Aesthetics

In the context of Indigenous cultures, aesthetics include ceremony, ritual, celebration, art, music, dancing and song. As with myth, story and legend, aesthetics are effective vehicles for transmitting knowledge because they "…teach without being intrusive, because the [audience] can ignore the oblique instruction or apply it to the degree he or she is ready to accept, without offence" (Castellano, 2000, p. 31). For the same reason aesthetics, like myth, story and legend, are also a powerful catalyst in Indigenous people's reinforcement of self-identity and self-determination (collaborative conversation with Cooper, 2006).

Aesthetics are basically an epistemology of representation. These representations do not merely provide symbols for words or objects but rather they provide complex "formulas of thought" (Peat, 1994, p. 269) which, as an integral part of communal or societal life, provide *deep connection with* the animating power (Cajete, 2004; Peat, 1994) of the universe. This deep connection ensures that, to Indigenous peoples, the representation of the bear, the tree and the eagle, for example, possesses the exact characteristics, powers and roles of the living bear, tree and eagle. This in turn means that in the mind *and experience* of Indigenous peoples the bear in the art, ceremony, song or dance *is* a bear in

reality. The art, ceremony, song or dance provides both the connection to and the honouring and renewal of, the relationship between the people and the holarchy of which they are part. To the Western mind, this is almost incomprehensible but to Indigenous people it is the commonsense acknowledgement and appreciation of the holarchical and holographic universe and the cyclical and non-linear time which is inherent therein. In Australian Aboriginal cultures, for example, aesthetics have a close relationship with the totems of the people as well as ceremony and so on (Edwards, 1994). Each person has their own animalistic totem such as cod or kangaroo and so on. People cannot eat the meat associated with their totem because when they die Aboriginal people believe they return to their totem. Periodically Indigenous people return to their communities and to their traditional lands, to meet and have what is known as Corroboree. Bernie Tierney described it thus:

> I have got to be there at Corroboree to…put my song lines in, [to add his family's cultural information to that of the community in a]…desert art painting…those big sand paintings [take a long time]…complete and then [once the] Corroboree was done they were rubbed out because they were only there for Baiame to look down and see. (collaborative conversation, 2006)

Baiame is the Great Spirit or Great Father of Australia's high plains and south-eastern regions. He is the "incarnation of kindness and care for other" and lives in the sky with one of his wives described as "Mother-of -All". Baiame created the world and all things on it (Reed, 1997, p. 19). The creation of large sand paintings at Corroboree is an ancient practice undertaken because:

> …ancient Aborigines [believed] they created their world in their mind and they [each] sung it up…[during celebrations, rites and rituals such as Corroboree] and their thought was turned into reality and that's still the basis of [Aboriginal culture in Australia]… everything that we see around us took place in a person's mind first and that's the ancient belief. (conversation with Tierney, 2006)

However, attendance at Corroboree is a complex cultural form:

> …if you're not there to sing up your meat and [for some reason] you're killed, the belief was "hey look there isn't going to be any kangaroos. I can hate this Bernie, I can hate his guts, I can bash his arms and legs but I can't kill him because if he's not there at the…ceremony we've got no kangaroo, we're stuffed. (conversation with Tierney, 2006)

So the relationship between the cosmology of the people, their personal totem, the animals that form their immediate context, their aesthetic practices, and their ceremonies are all interconnected and rooted in the need for cultural "self-preservation…therefore you have

to look after each other" for the long-term survival of all (conversation with Tierney, 2006).

As can be seen from the example above (conversation with Tierney, 2006), Indigenous cosmology and spirituality utilise these representations and the collective consciousness they represent to provide a connection to both the natural world and to the storehouse of knowledge and experience gained by their ancestors (Peat, 1994). They "serv[e] as a bridge between realities" (Cajete, 2004, p. 54) providing access to the wisdom, insight and praxis contained in the universe and that Western science is only just beginning to acknowledge (Bohm, 1980; Cousins, 2006; Laszlo, 2007, 2006d; Laszlo & Currivan, 2008; Laszlo et al., 2003; McTaggart, 2008a; Talbot, 1991).

Learning

For Indigenous cultures learning is "a communal social activity [in which people are] allowed to discover and rediscover their…creative abilities" (Cajete, 2000, p. 20), either as individuals or groups, but their experiences are shared with their community through the socialisation vehicles of ceremony, song, story, art, dance and consensus. Indigenous epistemologies are truly ecological in nature. They are formed by the interrelated, holarchical or holographic nature that characterises Indigenous cosmologies, continually building on the communal "storehouse of [knowledge and] information templates" (de Quincey, 2006, p. 110) whilst still evolving to meet new challenges.

Learning is completely integrated into the life of an Indigenous person, community and society. Often contained and therefore immortalised, in a person's name are references to key events such as floods, famine, or astronomical events in the history of the culture, society or community (Wane, 2000). The knowledge is embedded in the names of a generation and transmitted by way of initiation and rite of passage ceremonies by Elders who provide the knowledge or teachings as a gift, usually in a specific context and at a specific time in the receiver's life. The receiver of traditional teachings is often expected to prepare to receive the teaching by undergoing a specific ritual. Once the receiver is deemed by the Elder to be ready for the teaching it will be given (Castellano, 2000; Kulchyski et al., 1999). Permeating through all the teachings and actions of an Elder is the understanding that the Earth is sacred and it is the responsibility of all people to respect all things and maintain balance and harmony.

Indigenous knowledge is deeply contextual. It is based on both traditional knowledge *and* lived experience of the whole community. As was mentioned earlier, in Indigenous cosmologies all things in the universe are imbued with spirits and energies. In turn the practices embedded in the cosmologies of Indigenous cultures ensure that balance and harmony is maintained (Cajete, 2004; Peat, 1994). Ceremony, story, song, dance, art and everyday practical activities are seen as ways to connect with and show respect for, these spirits and energies. Insights acquired through participating in ceremonies or gained from dreams and visions are respected and the knowledge gained is viewed as being of deep significance. Furthermore, the recipient of these insights is judged to have connected with the animating spirits and energies of the universe. Indigenous peoples also share this received knowledge and experience with the community through the same aesthetic practices noted above, ultimately contributing to the community's shared knowledge. Finally, Indigenous epistemologies encompass survival, the environment and the maintenance of balance and harmony in the holarchy of the universe through emphasising respect, reciprocity, mutuality and balance.

In many cases learning is engaged in experientially. By mimicking what Elders do and repeating actions, songs and stories over time the young person masters and understands the moral principles and relationships that the task in question encompasses (Groome, 1998). Repetition and experience are major components of Indigenous epistemologies. An example of learning through day-to-day activities can be seen below:

> He was like an uncle who helps with the training of his brother's sons, aloof but affectionate, judgmental but secretly amused, gentle and harsh, guiding without directing. What he taught us permeated everything we did. He taught us to look for subtleties, for nuances and we had to be quick to catch his hints. …He gave us information that would lead us on to the next step a bit at a time and he always waited until we incorporated what we had learned before he nudged us toward something else. …We came to our skills as he had come to his, through a series of ideas and understandings that could only be gotten out of experience. He taught us to make use of everything, to live with the least disruption of the Earth, to revere what we took from the woods, to master our fear, to hone our special skills sharper, to expand our senses and our awareness, to live in the space of the moment and to understand eternity. …we should never so focus our attention that we were not also aware of the larger pattern around us. (Brown Jr & Watkins, 1978, pp. 11-12)

Young people simultaneously integrate the traditional knowledge from their community with knowledge from their own experiences. They then utilise that integrated knowledge in the many and varied practical situations they encounter. The embodied and contextual nature of this experiential knowledge, reinforced by structured and accurate transmission

from one generation to the next ensures that learning is always practical. To Indigenous people theoretical knowledge is essentially worthless. "…Elders taught us that we're not here to preserve our tradition, but to live it" (Peltier, 1999, p. 74), "I never say what I have heard, I only tell what I have experienced, because I do not want to lie" (Angmarlik, 1999, p. 273). This learning, always gained in the appropriate context, is reinforced through observation, action, repetition and reflection in the appropriate environment for the task to be carried out (Angmarlik, 1999; Cajete, 1994; Uyarasuk, 1999). Supporting the concept that one does not really know something until they have explained it to another person (Sukhomlinsky, 1979-1980), Indigenous people have a responsibility to pass on what they know to those younger or less competent than themselves (Cajete, 1994) and all of this necessarily occurs within the holarchy of the universe. Indigenous people do not seek to control or exploit others or the environment; instead, they seek to *Be* in symbiotic relationships that perpetuate balance and harmony in the universe.

Leadership and community

The notion of leadership and indeed of leaders themselves in Indigenous societies is informed by their cosmologies and is therefore different from the view of leadership prevalent in the West. Just as in all aspects of Indigenous cultures, leadership typically occurs within a framework of balance and harmony. Indigenous leaders are in a "reciprocal relationship" (Ywahoo, 1987, p. 16) with their communities. Indigenous leadership is about "service and support of community values and life [and]…about commitment to nurturing a healthy community and enriching the cultural tradition of one's people" (Cajete, 1994, p. 175). In Indigenous societies, a person rises to the position of leader through selfless service to their community. "Indigenous leaders were predisposed to care deeply and imagine richly with regard to their people" (Cajete, 1994, p. 175). In many Indigenous cultures one does not seek to become a leader. Leaders are "chosen by the [community] having watched them grow [and] through observing their meritorious actions" (Ywahoo, 1987, p. 135). Finally, "[Indigenous leaders] listened to their own visions and the visions of their people; they used their imagination and creativity; and they gathered the people and moved them together to find their life" (Cajete, 1994, p. 175).

In many Indigenous cultures the role of the leader is supplemented and supported by the Elders or wise people in a community. The roles of Elders vary in different cultures. In some they have lost their traditional roles and responsibilities while in others they are

regaining them, and in yet others the role of Elders is as important and strong as it has ever been. However, in general, becoming an Elder is an honour bestowed on a person by their community and is not merely a feature of age. It is common for those who are described as Elders by their community to feel that it is not appropriate in their case or to acknowledge it only reluctantly (Benedict, 1999; Carpenter, 1999; Mosher, 1999; Skead, 1999). Elders are the keepers of the traditional knowledge, the guardians of ceremony, the interpreters of dreams and visions (Mosher, 1999; Nitsch, 1999) and the most important teachers (Castellano, 2000; Kulchyski et al., 1999). There are "all kinds of Elders" (Ward, 1999, p. 46) and although some are deemed to have been given specific gifts from the Creator, such as the gift of healing, they are all responsible for helping the people.

> The role of the Elders is to help open the door to the person within. The Elders act as role models for Native identity. They speak softly, listen quietly, reach out in a friendly manner, offer ideas when needed, make people feel comfortable and use humour as 'good medicine'. An Elder does not give advice without first being asked. (Nitsch, 1999, p. 78)

The essence of Indigenous community is reciprocity and cooperation. People work together and provide for each other within established societal structures for the common good (Angmarlik, 1999). In Indigenous communities:

> …feelings of solidarity and mutuality were developed through participation in community rituals, celebrations and associations. Solidarity was developed though association with non-kin social groupings such as age sets, age grades and ritually defined generations of age-mates whose major roles in the society were to educate the young, particularly about communal values and to instil a sense of commitment to the collective. Mutuality, as an Indigenous characteristic, was always demonstrated. (Elabor-Idemudia, 2000).

In the African context, communities are "held together by [the] trinity of closely intertwined forces…of spirituality, development and politics [within a worldview which supported] harmony and balance with all existence" (Wangoola, 2000, p. 270). Traditionally, the power in the community is "exercised by wise women and men" (Wangoola, 2000, p. 271) and, as was mentioned earlier, the honour of being deemed wise is conferred on a person over time as a person is observed to be virtuous in outlook and actions. A key aspect of this virtue is that the person's actions and opinions are not formed through "partisan interests [but] driven by the good of the community…not only for today but also in perpetuity. In this context community means the living, the unborn, the dead and nature as a whole" (Wangoola, 2000, p. 271).

Decision-making in Indigenous cultures is typically based around their oral tradition and agreement is reached through discussion. This discussion is shaped by the importance Indigenous cultures place on consensus, values, virtues and self-esteem (Jacobs, 1998; Jacobs & Jacobs-Spencer, 2001; Nitsch, 1999). For example, in the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy each traditional village has a meeting place where everyone, including children, is able to be heard and decisions are not be made until all who want to speak have had the opportunity (Nitsch, 1999). In much of the North American context, decisions need to be agreed by *all* members of the community. Any decision is made against clearly defined criteria and not judged just on how it will affect the community at that time the decision is being made but also what effect it will have on the community for the next *seven generations* (D. Blanchard, 1980; Looking Horse, 2001; Nitsch, 1999; Peltier, 1999). The criteria used by the Six Nations in all decision making are:

- Peace, that is, how will the decision affect the peace of the community, the land and the surrounding people?
- Righteousness, that is, is the decision morally and ethically right?
- Power, that is, how will this decision affect the power in the region – will power over the community's affairs be devolved to or taken by someone else as a result of this decision? (D Blanchard, 1980; Maclaine & Baxendale, 1991; Tehanetorens, 2000; Wallace, 1994)

Although not widely known outside North America, the *Great Law of Peace* is an ontology and axiology brought to the Six Nations by the Peacemaker *Deganawidah* and his companion *Hiawatha* from the Creator (Tehanetorens, 2000; Wallace, 1994). It was the major influence in the forming of the *United States Constitution* (Ywahoo, 1987) and the *United Nations Charter*. In addition it was the precursor to "women's suffrage, the initiative, the referendum, the recall, universal social security and representative government" (Tehanetorens, 2000, p. 124).

Practical activity

As was noted earlier, in Indigenous cosmologies the universe is constantly unfolding, enfolding and evolving and the people are active participants in that evolution. As such, Indigenous cultures are rooted in embodied awareness – *Being* and *Doing* and *Experiencing* are central to *Being*. However, *Doing* is not simply an individual activity rather it is a shared activity, that is, actually shared with others in the community (in that a

number of people are undertaking the same activity at the same time), or shared in terms of the context in which the activity is situated (in that it is an activity which affects or benefits others in the community).

Practical activity as an orientation in Indigenous cultures is completely integrated into the cosmology of the culture. It may manifest through ritual, celebration, ceremony, music, dance, song and crafts, or through daily survival activities such as hunting, fishing, planting, harvesting, preparing food, making tools, tending for animals, caring for family and community and building. Some Indigenous cultures engage in complex land management techniques such as systematic burning of the land in order to facilitate rejuvenation (Gostin & Chong, 1998). Whatever the activity is that is being undertaken, it is undertaken in a mindful way that engages the individual with their community, their traditions and the widest context within which they exist. Practical activity can also include what might be described as games, although in Indigenous communities games are used for the enhancement of skills useful in hunting, defending the community or life in general (Cajete, 2005; Kulchyski et al., 1999; Peat, 1994). In many North American Indigenous cultures one of the most popular physical activities is running (Cajete, 1994) which is often undertaken competitively, however, the competition is used to provide added incentive to the enhancement of a person's running skills rather than as competition for its own sake. For Indigenous people practical activity contributes to the community and will "help bring forth the potentialities of future generations" (Jacobs, 1998, p. 187). Mastery of an activity is sought not for ego or personal gain but in order to best serve the community, and achievement is not based on the volume of output but rather on the level of skill and the attitude to the task being undertaken (Cajete, 1994; Jacobs, 1998). This is a typical example of practical activity as a flow experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed Indigenous cultures. Having discussed my understanding of the terms Indigenous and Indigenous knowledge I then highlighted the eight observable orientations which I see emerging from the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of Indigenous cultures.

Chapter five – Eastern traditions (or ontologies)

Overview

In this chapter I move on to Eastern traditions (or ontologies) the third meta-narrative discussed in this section. Having established the background to my selection of the five traditions being explored I then go on to highlight the eight observable orientations which my investigation has revealed as emerging from the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of the five traditions which I will describe as Eastern. As with the previous chapter I am not suggesting that all the traditions discussed in this chapter are the same and can therefore be grouped together to be considered as a homogenised whole, indeed, even within each tradition there are still, and ever have been, a number of distinct versions or branches (Cleary, 1991; Cleary, 2005b; Ono, 2003; Suzuki, 2000; Wong, 1997). Neither am I suggesting the unique cultures from whence they originate are the same or interchangeable. However, I am suggesting that from my investigation I have again identified themes which appear to be common within and between the traditions explored in this chapter, and that these commonalities may be grouped together for discussion.

The idea of the Orient or the East has held a fascination for people in the West ever since Niccolo and Maffeo Polo (father and uncle of Marco respectively) ventured from Venice to the court of Mongol Emperor, Kublai Khan in the thirteenth century. In the West, it was the memoirs Marco Polo himself that were the chief source of information about China, for hundreds of years. Having said that, even the idea of the Orient or the East is open to a variety of interpretations; for some it refers to East and Southeast Asia (China, Mongolia, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, North and South Korea, Japan, Philippines, Indonesia and so on). For others it may *also* include Central and Southern Asia (India, Pakistan, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Tibet and so on), and for yet others it may include everything east of and including, Turkey and the Gulf States. Using this broad definition of the East, Christianity and Judaism would be Eastern religions. In this document I refer to central, east, southeast and southern Asia as the East, and more specifically India, China and Japan.

For the purposes of this work I have chosen to explore the spiritual traditions of Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, Shinto and Zen because they are some of the major

traditions of the area I have described as the East, because they are so interlinked it would be impossible to discuss one without at least some reference to the others, and because they are spiritual traditions which I have some personal experience of to a lesser or greater degree beyond my immersion in texts. There is considerable debate in modern literature around whether spiritual traditions such as those being discussed in this chapter are philosophies or religions. From my investigation I have determined that each can, to a lesser or greater degree, be *both* a religion and a philosophy depending on the aspects of the tradition under discussion. However, my immersion and investigation has shown that, in their so-called pure state, they would more appropriately be described as ontologies or ways of being.

It should be noted that it is possible to observe a great many variations on the spellings of key terminology within English translations of ancient texts. However, I have attempted to be consistent and where direct quotes are used I have maintained the authors' spelling.

Eight orientations

As I noted earlier, the aim of this chapter is to explore the common themes that can be discerned in five distinct but interrelated Eastern ontologies. I have described these common themes through eight observable orientations and I describe the process of extrapolating these eight orientations from my immersion in the texts in Chapter seven. Again I should make clear that the delineation of these orientations is used for explanatory purposes only and in practice these ontologies address the whole person, within the whole context of their existence at all times.

Cosmology and spirituality

In the previous chapter I noted that my understanding of cosmology is that it encompasses "all fields of knowing…[all the] various domains of the universe…[and all the] appropriate relationships between humans and the natural world [and] between humans and other humans" (Oliver & Gershman, 1989, pp. 55-57). This is equally true of the cosmologies inherent in the Eastern thought being discussed here. However, before exploring these cosmologies I will briefly mention the *Tao*. Tao, sometimes called The Way, is the most basic and paradoxically most complex, concept in Eastern thought. It is explicit in both Confucianism and Taoism and arguably implicit in Buddhism, Shinto and

Zen. However, "The Tao cannot be understood because we are it" (Grigg, 1989, p. xii). Tao can be translated to mean "a path, a way, a principle, a method, a doctrine, a system of order; it may also mean the matrix, structure and reality of the universe itself. …It is the source of everything" (Cleary, 2003a, p. 3). It is "boundless and cannot be exhausted, although all things depend on it for existence. Hidden beneath transition and change, the Tao is the permanent underlying reality" (Wong, 1997, p. 23). The *Te-Tao Ching*[1] says:

> As for the Way, the Way that can be spoken of is not the constant way;
>
> As for names, the name that can be named is not the constant name.
>
> The nameless is the beginning of the ten thousand things;
>
> The named is the mother of ten thousand things.
>
> Therefore, those constantly without desires, by this means will perceive its subtlety.
>
> Those constantly with desires, by this means will see only that which they yearn for and seek….(Tzu, 1989, p. 53)

The Tao is conceptualised as the source of all life although it is not a deity or spirit or anthropomorphised creator (Wong, 1997).

The cosmologies of each of the ontologies being discussed here are unique however; my immersion in the texts has revealed that there are significant synergies between them. Confucian cosmology is based on the concept that:

> …humans are pre-eminently social beings and human life takes place within a network of social relations. The full realisation of human potential depends on the proper cultivation of relationships with other people and on properly fulfilling one's role within society as a whole. (Cleary, 1991, p. x)

This clearly acknowledges humanity as an integral part of the holarchy of the universe. Confucianism is also based on the understanding that both human life and the norms of behaviour which humanity should undertake are "derived from the cosmic order, from the Tao or heaven" (Cleary, 1991, p. xi) stating quite clearly that the roles and responsibilities humanity has are derived from their part in that holarchy. The inclusion of the term 'heaven' in this quote does not mean that Confucianism is a theistic religion. Use of the term 'heaven' is simply a linguistic feature to express that which gives humanity life, makes people who they are and gives them norms of behaviour to live by. "Heaven stands

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[1] The Henricks translation of the Ma-wang-tui manuscripts are described as the *Te-Tao Ching* rather than the more normal *Tao Te Ching* since the Ma-wang-tui manuscripts were found to be ordered in a different way

above [or outside] the human world and provides the basic pattern for the proper ordering of human affairs" (Cleary, 1991, p. xi). In Confucianism it is the Tao which provides order to both the universe and to the individual. The Tao can be observed and experienced in both natural and moral law (Cleary, 1991, p. xi), providing the link between the individual, family, community, society and universe through established norms of behaviour.

The cosmology of Taoism is based on the three cardinal principles of Taoism—*tzu-jin*, *hsiang-sheng* and *wu-wei* (and *wu-wei-wu*) (Grigg, 1989, 1995). Tzu-jin (or Tzu-jan) is spontaneity, or the natural balance that things find by their own nature acting in relationship with everything else's own natures (Grigg, 1989, 1995). Hsiang-sheng can be interpreted as mutual arising. This concept means that "nothing functions in isolation, everything functions with everything else" (Grigg, 1989, p. xxx). Wu-wei and, indeed, wei-wu-wei, are key aspects of existing in tune with the Tao. Wu-wei is usually described as non-action or non-doing and wu-wei-wu is action without action or doing without doing (Grigg, 1989, 1995). Non-doing or non-action is "a mixture of thoughtless volition and purposeful passivity" (Grigg, 1995, p. 149). It is acting with spontaneity, taking the "perfectly timed and appropriate reflex to the rightness of the moment" (Grigg, 1995, p. 149), that could also be described as a flow experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Wu-wei and wei-wu-wei are about balance, about not forcing, and about patience. This is not the same as doing nothing. Doing nothing is passive whilst non-doing is active, and, rather than decisive action, it is decisive non-action which is *not* the same as inaction (Grigg, 1989). Together, these cardinal principles ensure that humanity works with the universe rather than against it. They require that humans cease to be selfish, deliberate, willful, compulsive and aggressive and ensure that "we seem to move…*with* rather than *against* the nature of things. Our attitude broadens and deepens until we meet adversity by softly enclosing and absorbing it" (Grigg, 1989, p. xxxv). Removing self-interest allows room for the Way (the Tao) and "Taoism is grounded in what is simply and profoundly natural" (Grigg, 1995, p. 149). This is much like the normative order that the Tao brings to Confucianism (Cleary, 1991, p. xi).

Ultimately Taoist and Confucian cosmologies are based on the concept that "all things originate from the Tao and return to the Tao. Change is that which sets in motion the coming and going of things and divination is a way of seeing the patterns of change"

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from other later versions (Henricks, 1989). It is this translation which I predominantly refer to in this

(Wong, 1997, p. 124). Understanding the nature of change allows people to understand what has happened in the past and what will happen in the future. This cosmological concept is similar to the Buddhist teachings in the *Threefold Lotus Sutra* that, according to their nature, everything emerges, continues, transforms and vanishes in a continual cycle of evolution (Kato et al., 1975; Niwano, 2005). It is only by being in tune with the flow of the timeless universe that this cosmology can be fully understood. Buddhism regards (as do Confucianism and Taoism) the whole of the universe as "one embodiment" (Yun, 2001, p. 15). Buddhist cosmology can be said to be based on the concepts of joy and harmony, oneness and coexistence, respect and tolerance, equality and peace, wholeness and freeness, and nature and life (Yun, 2001). Confucianist, Taoist and Buddhist cosmologies when they are conceptualised as religions, have a tendency to intellectualise the interconnectedness of the universe and the place of humanity in it. However, in their pure state, this is a sensory and experiential realisation rather than an intellectual one.

Shintoist cosmology is formulated on the simple observance of and participation in, the cycles of renewal in nature through ancient rites and customs which have been handed down for generations. Shinto is transmitted through the sensory experiences of these rites, customs, festivals and attendance at shrines. The *Awe* and mystery surrounding these sensory experiences is so strong that even people who have drifted away from the faith in their everyday lives invariably return to the family shrine to follow the traditional ways at key spiritual and familial junctures. In addition Shinto is both individual and communal, providing unity to both family and community through the location of shrines and the Kami (or spirits) associated with them. Shinto is a holographic practice. It includes the whole of nature, that is, all things both organic and inorganic and:

> …the world is not in contrast with nor opposition to man [sic]…it is filled with the blessings of the Kami and is developing through the power of harmony and cooperation…This world is inherently good. That which interferes with a man's [sic] happiness should be expelled. It belongs to another world. (Ono, 2003, p. 103)

In each of these traditions there is the notion that the world is "progressing from chaos to order, from the confusion of contradictions to a state of harmony and unity…in society good order is evolving as a result of mutual aid and cooperation" (Ono, 2003, p. 102) and through this evolution the individual realises their True Nature and becomes in tune with the harmony and unity of the universe.

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document.

Nature

Nature is synonymous with Eastern ontologies through the concepts of balance and harmony and is perhaps best illustrated by the Five Elements (Wu Hsing) of classic Confucianist and Taoist thought. They are Fire, Earth, Metal, Water and Wood. They interact "via the cycles of creation and control" (Reid, Connor, Chuen, Sutton, & Rusher, 1988, p. 153). It is during these cycles that *Chi* (or *Qi* or *Ki*), the vital energy inherent in all things, flows from one element to the next. These cycles are readily observable in nature as "*Water* transforms in to *Wood* to make it grow. *Wood* burns, creating *Fire*, which turns into ash, which feeds the *Earth*. Earth condenses under pressure to form *Metal*, which generates *Water*" [my emphasis] (Reid et al., 1988, p. 153). Observation of these cycles shows how the combined elements control the others and retain balance in the Earth, or indeed, the universe. However, the holographic and holarchical nature of Confucianism and Taoism means that observation of the above cycle is not only restricted to nature it can equally be applied to people. "The same forces that are at work in nature are at work within us as well. Living our lives in harmony with nature also means to live life in harmony with our True Nature" (Crowell, 2002, p. 19). Whilst in Zen, everything is Zen and everything is one:

> ...there is nothing that is not Zen. I lift my finger thus and there is Zen. I sit in silence all day uttering no words and there too is Zen. You see the flowers blooming in the garden, you hear the birds singing in the woods and you have Zen there. No words are needed to explain Zen, for you have it already before they are pronounced. The question is asked simply because you did not know that you had Zen in you, with you, around you; and therefore it is easy to answer. (Suzuki, 2000, p. 33)

Taoism and Zen essentially focus on "being in harmony with the fundamental natural forces and laws of the cosmos and so following the natural way" (Ho, O'Brien, & Palmer, 1990, p. 9). Confucianism takes that a step further. It articulates individual and social norms of behaviour that are apparent from the relationship with the Tao (and heaven), which inherently accept the part humanity plays in the holarchy of the universe. This acceptance comes from the Confucian understanding "all people and all things in Heaven and Earth are originally a single body, a single heart" (Lü Kun cited in Cleary, 1991, p. 169).

The holarchy of the universe is also clearly observable in Shinto where all entities, not just people, but rocks, mountains, plants, animals, rivers and natural elements can be Kami

(Spirits). Although in this document the 'Nature' orientation refers to nature as the natural world, for Confucianists, Taoists, Buddhists and Shintoists nature (the natural world) is also intimately related to Nature (The Tao, the natural flow of the universe) and True Nature (the intimate, spiritual relationship humanity has with the Tao, or the universe), although the precise terminology used within each ontology varies.

Contemplative practice

As has been noted earlier, contemplative practice is simply any activity that allows the "merging of subject and object" (Miller, 1994, p. vii). In Eastern ontologies contemplative practice is often understood to be formal, institutionalised or ritualised meditation, however, in many traditions contemplative practice can take the form of any number of practices, both formalised and not. The formalised, ritualised nature of contemplation in some traditions has led to misunderstandings by novices and dilettantes that the practice is the goal in and of itself. However, generally, contemplative practice is merely a means to an end not the end itself. For example, in Taoism, meditation is used to "cultivate health and longevity and attain the highest level of spiritual development, the union with the Tao" (Wong, 1997, p. 199). In this example *union with the Tao* is the aim, not the meditative practice itself. Certainly, novices use contemplative practice in order to "clear the mind, minimise desire, balance the emotions and circulate internal energy" (Wong, 1997, p. 199), however, once a person believes the practice itself is the aim or the focus, they have lost their way.

The range of contemplative practices is broad. In Taoism alone (depending on the source you consult) there are twenty (Soo, 1986) or twelve (Wong, 1997) distinct styles of formal contemplative practice, or meditation, many of which appear in other traditions in one form or another. In Buddhist practice there are five specific types of practice (Cleary, 2005a). Some forms of contemplative practice require the practitioner to adopt specific postures or practices or to repeat certain names or phrases, but not all are sedentary nor do all require mantras or visualisations. Some do not require the practitioner to be guided once they have learned the technique from a Master, although conversely some require constant close supervision since they deal with alchemical transformation of the body. Finally, some forms of contemplative practice are advanced techniques, focussing on attaining spiritual development and "are usually practiced together with techniques that strengthen the skeletal system and regulate the internal physiology" (Wong, 1997, p. 210).

In Buddhist practice, meditation or contemplative practice, is predicated on the need to transcend duality. Buddhist meditation allows careful observation of ideas, practices and things which are, in some way, destructive in people's lives, understanding of their cause and effects and the significance of these ideas, practices and things in people's lives (The society for the promotion of Buddhism, 2005). Pema Chödrön describes it as a "process of lightening up [of] trusting the basic goodness of what we have and who we are" and that wisdom exists within every person (2001b, p. 6). Through a person coming to terms with and understanding who they are they begin to understand their True Nature and thence they develop a true understanding of others as well as their connection with all levels of the holarchies they exist within. This allows avoidance of destructive ideas, practices and other such things in the future.

The Zen of Zen practice, as opposed to Zen Buddhism, is best described as "transcendental wisdom or intuitive knowledge" (Suzuki, 2000). Zen is actually a contraction of Zazen which means meditation in the original Sanskrit (Dhyāna) which, when translated into Chinese became Ch'an, eventually Zazen contracted to be Zen. Although no doubt as a result of multiple translations 'meditation' is not really an accurate description of the essence of Zen. According to thirteenth century Zen Master Dogen, it is "simply sitting in the midst of what utterly is, with full participation" (cited in Fischer, 2004, p. xxvi). In Zen, contemplative practice and Zen are one. It is entering into life wholly and transcendentally, so, "activity in daily life is Zen and sitting is Zen. In speaking and in silence, in motion and stillness, your body should be tranquil. Do not be concerned only with the practice of zazen" (Dogen, 2004, p. 38). This teaching relates to the notion that using Zen Buddhism (or any other ontology) to achieve Buddha-hood, awakening, enlightenment and the like, is like using a thorn to remove a thorn from the skin. It is only when both thorns are discarded that there is Zen (Watts, 1989).

> In Zen there is neither self nor Buddha to which one can cling, no good to gain and no evil to be avoided, no thoughts to be eradicated and no mind to be purified, no body to perish and no soul to be saved. At one blow this entire framework of abstractions is shattered to fragments. (Watts, 1989, pp. 152-153)

Any contemplative practice requires commitment, patience and discipline. The presumed benefits for the practitioner can only be attained if the practice is carried out holistically, that is, in cooperation with an appropriate lifestyle and attitude. Even in traditions where practitioners do not appear to participate in contemplative practice, evidence of such

practice can be observed. For example, in Shinto the rituals of worship, purification, offering, prayer and feast, though thoroughly inculcated into everyday life, are practised in a manner of "service to the Kami" (Ono, 2003, p. 50) which is inherently mindful. However, more relevant is the mindful manner in which Shintoists go about their daily lives, because:

> …that which disturbs social order, causes misfortune and obstructs worship of the Kami and the peaceful development of this world is evil…A correct judgment, one which accords with the mind of the Kami, is possible when there is a state of unity between the divine and the human, when man can approach the Kami with a clear bright mind. (Ono, 2003, p. 107)

Myth, story and legend

The ontologies being considered here are very old, with some having their origins in the pre-religious and pre-philosophical times of shamanism (3000 BCE - 2000 BCE) (Ono, 2003; Wong, 1997). This kind of shamanism was interrelated with the concept of "a powerful and all pervasive spirit world which is both interlocked with this world and also set apart" (Ho et al., 1990, p. 8). At the heart of these traditions are myths, stories and legends which involve creatures, characters, practices and occurrences that modern science and sensibilities would suggest are impossible. Yet to the people who embody these ontologies those creatures, characters, practices and occurrences are as real as those experienced every day by the people themselves. Such acceptance of the seemingly paranormal is common in all spiritual traditions, including Christianity. The intrinsic nature of Taoist myths, stories and legends can be seen for example in the tales of the *Eight Immortals* (Ho et al., 1990) who apparently lived somewhere around 618 - 906 CE. As is common with enduring myths, at least some of the Immortals can be verified as being actual historical figures. Indeed, representations of the Immortals can still be observed in people's homes, shrines, or in significant public buildings, such as city Drum or Bell Towers, where they are consulted when required, much as various Christian sects may revere particular Saints or pray to them under certain circumstances. As in other traditions, the Eight Immortals are not simply allegorical vehicles. They are formally and firmly part of Taoist cosmology, each being associated with its own trigram (series of three broken and unbroken lines which form the basis of Chinese divination). Shrine worship is not only confined to Taoist immortals. Shinto is predicated on communing with the Kami at shrines, both in the home and elsewhere, however, Kami and Shrines are localised with

relatively few Kami having universal appeal. Yet, despite this, the origin stories of the Japanese people are interwoven with myths, stories and legends of the Kami which lay the framework for the Japanese view of evolution, the observation of order in chaos, the development of a simple societal constitution and the norms of participating in everyday life including the practices of worship (De Bary, Keene, Tanabe, & Varley, 2001; Ono, 2003).

Finally, the myths, stories and legends that underpin Eastern ontologies are typical of stories of ordinary folk with ordinary hard lives eking out an existence and suffering the hardships of real life. The stories of *The Water Margin* (Nai-An, 1937), for example, deal with ordinary people combating the corruption of bureaucracy and the State. However, typical of such myths, stories and legends, they also showed that those same people lived in a magical world (Ho et al., 1990). Such a magical world is also apparent in the adventures of the Monkey King in *Journeys to the West* (Cheng'En, 1993a, 1993b, 1993c, 1993d), where multiple dimensions of reality combine with repeated demonstration that through living a good life one could become enlightened or awakened. In each of the traditions discussed in this chapter, myths, stories and legends are utilised as cornerstones of ontological, epistemological, axiological and methodological transmission, some implicitly in Taoist stories of Immortals and in Zen stories of enlightenment, and some explicitly like Buddhist Sutras, which contain explanations in an accessible form of the Buddha's wisdom (Thayer-Bacon, 2003). In other traditions stories are simply contemporary descriptions of the people, intrigues and events of the time which have been handed down for generations such as the *Taiheiki*, which has latterly been described as "a chronicle of medieval Japan" (McCullough, 2003).

Aesthetics

As described in the other chapters in this section aesthetics include, but are not limited to, art, music, performance and dance. Apart from Shrine aesthetics and architecture, the most obvious and sustaining aesthetic representations of Shintoism can be observed in the preservation of classical music (Gagaku), dances (Kagura and Bugaku) and popular forms of entertainment such as drama (Noh and Sato Kagura) (Ono, 2003). However, possibly the most visible aesthetic 'footprint' of the ontologies being discussed here, belongs to the traditions of Buddhism and Zen. There is a Zen expression "one showing is worth a hundred sayings" (Watts, 1989, p. 174) indicating its strong inclination for practical

demonstration. The role of aesthetics in Buddhism is partially reflective of the role of aesthetics in Shinto, in that temples themselves are adorned with the work of artisans and images and concepts from Buddhist teachings are represented in art and sculpture and so on. However, in Zen aesthetics (poetry, calligraphy, painting and garden design for example) the subjects of the art are represented in an ostensibly minimalist and very down-to-earth way. Even Buddha and other patriarchs, when represented by a Zen artisan, are shown in a natural and concrete way (Watts, 1989). The aim (if it can be called that) in Zen art is "artlessness" and representations are formed as naturally as the image or scene they depict (Watts, 1989). An example of this artlessness is Zen calligraphy.

Zen calligraphy emerged in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in Japan, though originally from China. This was a period of cultural and philosophical transfer between the two countries. To be adequately rendered, Zen calligraphy involves stick ink that is mixed with water to create ink of the correct density, suitable brushes and suitable paper (or silk). However, preparation is only a fraction of the artisan's skill:

> Writing or painting is done with a sharply pointed brush set in a bamboo stem—a brush which is held upright without resting the wrist on the paper and whose soft hairs give its strokes a great versatility. Since the touch of the brush is so light and fluid and since it must move continuously over the absorbent paper if the ink is to flow out regularly, its control requires free movement of the hand and arm as if one were dancing rather than writing on paper. In short, it is a perfect instrument for the expression of unhesitating spontaneity and a single stroke is enough to "give away" one's character to an experienced observer. (Watts, 1989, p. 178)

The Zen monk or artist can attempt attainment of this 'unhesitating spontaneity' through conscious practice of technique for years before finally attaining Zen. This attainment usually occurs in a moments of spontaneous clarity achieved without consciousness, when embodied artlessness, spontaneity and mindfulness meld in the moment of attainment. Common themes are a straight horizontal line, indicating 'Ichi' or 'One', or a solitary circle indicating 'Whole'.

Figure 5.1: Ichi, One (calligraphy by Kazuaki Tanahashi (Tanahashi, 2004)).   **Figure 5.2:** Whole (calligraphy by Ivan Thornton).

In actuality, in Taoism, Zen and Confucianism the aesthetic arts were and are, vehicles to allow the layperson to achieve embodied knowing (Watts, 1989). Any discussion of the Zen aesthetic experience is not complete without mention of cha-no-yu (the tea ceremony). The Zen tea ceremony is the essence of both attention to detail and attention to nature. It encompasses simple utensils, simple surroundings, no noise, no unnecessary talking, no ostentation and a clear attentive, transcendent mind (Hamill, 2000). Kakuzo Okakura describes cha-no-yu this way:

> The philosophy of tea is not mere aestheticism in the ordinary acceptance of the term, for it expresses conjointly with ethics and religion our whole point of view about man and nature. It is hygiene, for it enforces cleanliness; it is economics, for it shows comfort in simplicity rather than in the complex and costly; it is moral geometry, inasmuch as it defines our sense of proportion to the universe. It represents the true spirit of eastern democracy by making all its votaries aristocrats in taste. (2001, p. 4)

Learning

Learning, education or self-discovery in some form, are integral to the five ontologies being discussed in this chapter and it would be appropriate to describe them as both ontologies and epistemologies. The Taoist classic *Huainanzi* says "there is real knowledge only when there are real people" (The Masters of Huainan, 2003, p. 379). 'Real people' means those in harmony with the Tao, the awakened, the enlightened. Eastern ontologies frequently espouse the notion that anyone can become a Buddha or a Sage, and that humanity is connected and naturally in tune with the Tao, or that Zen, Buddha nature or the Tao is within every one. However, in many of these ontologies, gaining awakening, enlightenment or immortality requires a journey of both self and Self. Often the novice needs to study and understand appropriate texts to experience with the depth of their soul a connection with the animating power of the universe and reflect on this experience, and to

enter into a deep relationship with a suitable teacher (Cleary, 1991; Cleary, 2005b; Dorje, 2001; Wong, 1992). In fact *direct transmission* of wisdom from a suitable teacher is an integral part of Eastern epistemologies and ontologies (James, 2004; Shimabukuro & Pellman, 1995; Stevens, 2001; Suino, 1994; Zhang, 1998). For example, the lineage and teaching of school and master in the so-called pure Zen and Buddhist traditions can, in theory, be traced back to the Bodhidharma although this can sometimes be a convenience rather than a fact, much like British royalty who can theoretically trace their lineage back to King David. The teacher and the role they play are critical. In Vajrayana Buddhism the teacher is described as a 'dangerous friend' and entering into a relationship with a teacher is like entering into a marriage which will last a lifetime. This relationship is not one way though, teacher to student. It is a relationship of respect and reciprocity where "mutual examination is stressed: not only must the student test the Lama, but the Lama must test the student. The obligation of a Vajrayana Buddhist is to investigate with care, intelligence and maturity based on serious practice" (Dorje, 2001, p 27). However, in all cases the aim of the learning is not assimilation of information. Rather it is to gain a deep understanding of the Self and the connection of the Self to the mystery of the universe.

The *Te-Tao Ching* says

> Those who work at their studies increase day after day;
> Those who have heard the Tao decrease day after day.
> They decrease and decrease till they get to the point where they do nothing.
> They do nothing and yet there's nothing left undone…(Tzu, 1989, p. 17); and

> To know you do not know is best.
> Not to know you do not know is a flaw.
> Therefore, the Sage's not being flawed
> Stems from his recognising a flaw as a flaw.
> Therefore he is flawless. (Tzu, 1989, p. 42)

However, each of these traditions are embodied, therefore it is not enough just to study with a teacher, just to study texts, or just to reflect on their experiences of the universe. It takes combinations of all of these together with dedication, patience and commitment as well as adoption of an appropriate lifestyle and attitude. The *Te-Tao Ching* says "To understand others is to be knowledgeable; To understand yourself is to be wise" (Tzu,

1989, p. 85). As a result both formal and informal learning are essential. However, intellectual learning is not the goal it is simply a *partial* process *through* which the goal may be reached when combined with experience and the personal attributes noted above. The student must "experience things for themselves. For each individual practitioner, things are simply as real as they are real. If one has had no experience yet, then the experiment simply continues" (Dorje, 2001, p. 115). Although one starting point is as good as another (Chödrön, 2001a; Dorje, 2001), it is important to realise that the initial formation of the student-teacher relationship is the responsibility of the student (Watts, 1989) and not only may it take years to find a suitable teacher, but that teacher may appear in the most unexpected places (Wong, 1992).

Confucian education, as with other traditions, encompasses learning from texts, contemplative practice and practical application to everyday affairs. Confucian scholars were expected to understand the wisdom of the Sages as well as lessons learned from history. They were also expected to engage in self-reflection as a way to control their irrational impulses and maintain self-control. Finally, they were expected to apply the knowledge they had gained through these practices to the practicalities of everyday life, ensuring they followed a moral and virtuous path which benefited not only themselves but society as well (Cleary, 1991, p. xiv). A key feature of Confucianism is the emphasis on community and society over the individual. Darker periods in Confucian history were caused by people who became interested in self-aggrandisement and self-advancement and ignored the needs of the community by solely focussing on the self. However, Zen master Dahui says, "If you think there are any verbal formulations that are special mysterious secrets to be transmitted, this is not real Zen. Real Zen has no transmission. It is just a matter of people *experiencing* it, resulting in their ability to *see each other's vision and communicate tacitly*" [my emphasis] (Mazu et al., 2005, p. 183). The Zen (and Taoist) teacher guides the practitioner along the path to understanding their True Nature and to awakening to the essential nature of the universe. This awakening is an embodied learning process and the path must be a unique path of the student. The epistemological nature of Taoist practice can be summarised as:

> …emphasis[ing] the concepts of oneness, relationship and interconnectedness. There is a sense of unity and wholeness that acknowledges that everything in the cosmos and the forces that operate within it are essentially unfragmented and whole. Dualism and separation are only illusions of our senses and our goal is to be one with the wholeness of the Tao. (Crowell, 2002, p. 24)

On the other hand, the ancient origins of Shinto have meant a different kind of transmission. As with the so-called pure strands of other ontologies, Shinto is transmitted through the daily actions and interactions of life. Shinto traditions are so ingrained into the Japanese psyche that they are observed at an individual, familial, communal and societal level as a matter of course. This form of transmission is described as being "caught not taught" (Ono, 2003, p. 92). Shinto is an Indigenous faith. For Japanese people, participation in the festivals, observance of rites and attendance at shrines and so on is both a sensory and a visceral experience which connects them to the traditions of their most ancient ancestors and the place with which they are associated. It is the multi-levelled, experiential nature of Shintoism that guarantees its transmission. The participation, observation and attendance noted above are practised and experienced by the individual, family, community and society. As such, it is an immersive experience. Shintoist practice focuses on "realising the hopes and ideals of his [sic] ancestors…and … the inescapable duty of treating his [sic] descendants with even greater love and care… ancestors and descendants are literally one" (Ono, 2003, p. 104). This means that Shinto, too, is an embodied and epistemological experience which focuses on moral and ethical action within a framework of non-linear time, traditions and customs. It is this immersion experience (immersion in the everydayness of life and nature) that is central to all the ontologies being discussed here.

Eastern ontologies are rooted in the concept of transformation, and learning, in all its forms, is an essential aspect of transformation.

Leadership and community

Confucianism is an integrated system of practice based on clearly defined notions of social order, including politics. Confucianists:

> …emphasised social solidarity as the key to healthy society. All levels of society must be united by bonds of mutual respect and concern. No society can be strong if the upper and lower classes regard each other with suspicion and hatred. (Cleary, 1991, p. xiv)

The essence of Confucianism is moral and ethical behaviour of those with power, influence and/or responsibility which sets the tone for the whole of society. State officials should be chosen based on their "moral worth" and claims to power must be based on their "learning and virtue" (Cleary, 1991, p. xv). This is different from other traditions where

political status has periodically been granted through hereditary rites, corruption and greed. Confucian practice ensure that leaders practice integrity which in turn means that they are "creators, innovators, institution [and societal] builders…[and they] serve the needs of the[ir] people" (Cleary, 1991, p. xvi). Confucianist scholar Zou Shouyi of the Ming dynasty noted that:

> Confucius said "There are only two paths: human fellow-feeling, true humanity or the absence of human fellow-feeling, the absence of humanity". If you leave the former, you enter the latter. If for a day or for an hour you do not recognise human fellow-feeling, then for a day or for an hour you are not truly human. Without human fellow-feeling, we are not human. (cited in Cleary, 1991, p. 72)

As I noted earlier, Shintoism is based on moral and ethical values, rooted in ancient traditions and customs, transmitted through participation, observation and attendance in rites, festivals and shrines. However, the moral and ethical roots of Shintoism are not found in a canon of texts, nor did they originate as the *Law* of a cardinal being, either an actual person or a theistic construct.

> The stability of ancient Japanese society was maintained by the requirements of traditions and customs, which were flexible and could respond to the demands of each new age. Thus, moral judgments as to what was considered to be good or bad were not a fixed set of standards, but varied considerably depending on each specific situation. The Shinto manner of grasping truth takes into consideration the fact that values are constantly changing. For example, in Shinto ethics nothing—sex, wealth, killing and so on.,—is regarded as unconditionally evil. (Ono, 2003, p. 105)

Societal norms were established and maintained through a Clan system, which as with other cultures ensured mutuality, reciprocity and social responsibility. Human behaviour was governed by the relationship between the individual, family, community, society and the Kami. This notion of relative and changeable moral values continues through to modern Shinto, "the meaning and value of an action depends on its circumstances, motives, purpose, time, place and so on" (Ono, 2003, p. 106). Shinto is based on the concept that if a person's heart is pure and if their soul is good, then their actions will be in tune with the moral and ethical code of the day and therefore bring them into communion with the Kami.

Classical Taoism too, encompasses a full range of not only "natural, social and spiritual sciences" (Cleary, 2003b, p. 303) but also includes detailed direction in the spheres of "civilisation, culture and government" (Cleary, 2003b, p. 303). The classic Taoist text, *Huainanzi*, "links environmental husbandry, personal development and socio-political

evolution into a comprehensive vision of human life" (Cleary, 2003b, p. 303). The *Huainanzi* is attributed to a small group of Taoist Sages in the second century BCE in the court of Huainan, where the King was known to patronise learning (Cleary, 2003b). The Taoists of the *Huainanzi* believed that a stable society required leaders who were wise (Sages), supportive of the people, fair and modest in their behaviour. It is common to see the Sage portrayed as a person of 'lowly' standing who undertakes 'menial' tasks such as pulling water or carrying firewood. In reality these are not lowly or menial tasks they are supportive of the community needs, down-to-earth and grounded in the realities of the everyday. The *Huainanzi* says "Shennong was haggard, Yao was emaciated, Shun was burnt black, Yu was calloused. Looking at these enlightened leaders of old, we can see that sages do worry and toil for the common people very much indeed" (The Masters of Huainan, 2003, p. 310). Taoist society was a blend of law, good government, measured punishment and rewards. The *Huainanzi* says:

> In ancient times, those who gave rewards well could encourage people at little cost. Those who punished well prevented treachery with minimal penalties. Those who gave well were frugal in expenditures yet were charitable. Those who took well had much income yet were not resented by anyone. (The Masters of Huainan, 2003, p. 311)

Taoist society was affected through measured actions undertaken in tune with the Tao. However, it did not simply rely on the good nature of the people because "human abilities are not sufficient to be relied on alone; the arts of the Way are to be carried out in public" (The Masters of Huainan, 2003, p. 314), this means that actions were undertaken in a conscious but not calculating manner with those actions based in the balance and harmony of the Tao. Taoists believe that deviant actions of the individual, or indeed a dysfunctional society, are caused by stress, instability and lack of means brought on by poor governance. It is true that warfare and conflict was not unknown to Taoist society, however, it is assumed that the conditions for conflict are brought about by imbalance and iniquities caused by greed or gluttony of the few. The Taoist response is to:

> …meet the excited with calm; await the disturbed with control. Be formless, so as to master the formal, respond to change without contrivance. Then, even if you are unable to attain victory over opponents, opponents will have no way to attain victory over you. (The Masters of Huainan, 2003, p. 363)

In Zen, too, texts such as *Chanlin boaxun* (Zen Lessons) (Miaoxi [Dahui], Zhu-an, & Jingshan, 2005) combined "ultimate and ordinary truths, using society and conduct as a way into Zen enlightenment, by the practice of constructive criticism and higher

education" (Cleary, 2005b, p. 4) which was the norm in Buddhism until its institutionalisation and formalisation. *Chanlin boaxun* says:

> Master Fushan Yuan said:
>
> There are three essentials to leadership: humanity, clarity and courage.
>
> Humanely practiced the virtues of the Way promotes the influence of the teaching, pacifies those in both high and low positions and delights those who pass by.
>
> Someone with clarity follows proper behaviour and just duty, recognises what is safe and what is dangerous, examines people to see whether they are wise or foolish and distinguishes right and wrong.
>
> The courageous see things through to their conclusion, settling them without doubt. They get rid of whatever is wrong or false.
>
> Humanity without clarity is like having sprouts but not weeding. Courage without humanity is like knowing how to reap but not how to sow.
>
> When all three of these are present, the community thrives. When one is lacking, the community deteriorates. When two are lacking the community is in peril and when there is not one of the three, the way of leadership is in ruins. (Miaoxi [Dahui] et al., 2005, pp. 18-19)

Practical activity

In Eastern ontologies practical activity can encompass a wide range of activities including many which were previously mentioned in the context of contemplative practice as well as those everyday activities such as chopping wood, drawing water and selling cakes and so on. However, in this chapter, I will concentrate on the practical activity of martial arts since they have a key role in the histories and cultures of China and Japan as well as having an intimate relationship with Zen and Taoism. I also have some personal experience in this area of practical activity beyond my immersion in texts.

The relationship between Eastern ontologies and what may be described as martial arts is varied and complex. The martial arts traditions discussed in this document had their genesis and formative years in times of prolonged and recurrent warfare (Hoff, 2002; Irvine, 2000; Reid et al., 1988; Stevens, 2001; Suino, 1994; Tokitsu, 2004; Zhang, 1998). However, the maintenance and development of these traditions does not solely rest on these militaristic origins, they also have significant aesthetic and spiritual components (Ochiai, 2005; Okakura, 2001; Stevens, 2001; Tokitsu, 2004; Zhang, 1998). Amongst the Chinese arts are *Chi Kung*, *T'ai Chi Chuan*, *Hsing I* and *Pa Kua* (Reid et al., 1988). These so-called 'soft' arts evolved as ways to utilise the energy in the body to increase the flexibility and suppleness in ligaments and muscles (Soo, 1982) and as a route to holistic

health. Combining these arts with *Ch'ang Ming*, the Taoist practice of health and nutrition, allows the elasticity of the skin to be increased, purification and increased efficiency of the organs, provision of goodness to and increased speed of, circulation of the blood, and increasing physical vitality (Soo, 1982, 1986) through maintaining the balance of yin and yang. The soft arts provide a complete "systematic programme of exercise which will invigorate [the] entire body, with minimal risk of strain or injury" (Reid et al., 1988, p 9). However, as the soft arts are based on ancient philosophical traditions they also "lead you to new levels of self-knowledge and awareness and teach you how your body relates to your mind and to your inner being, your soul…They are forms of moving meditation" (Reid et al., 1988, p. 9). The art of *Pa Kua* relates to both Taoist and Confucian cosmology. The name refers to the eight trigrams of the *I Ching* and has been practised for around three thousand years. Underpinning Taoism is the concept that the universe is constantly in change and only by "accepting this state of permanent flux [can people] understand the reality of the world" (Reid et al., 1988, p. 66). *Pa Kua* literally means "doing the changes" (Reid et al., 1988, p. 65). This art contains many esoteric and obscure ideas of impermanence and the relationship between humanity and the constantly changing universe. The skilled practitioner is able to "change and react instantly and naturally in response to the…changes that affect us as we move through life" (Reid et al., 1988, p. 65).

The Japanese Budo arts traditionally used the suffix *jutsu* meaning *Art* or *Technique* in their naming a practice which continued well into the Tokugawa period (1600-1868 CE). During the emergent peace in the latter part of this period the Samurai (knights or warriors) found their opportunities for battle or duelling much reduced. Two things resulted from this. First, Samurai had more time to explore aesthetic and spiritual aspects of their life *and* art. Second, the emphasis in the martial arts began to be increasingly focussed on preserving traditional culture, educating people and extending the philosophical aspects of the arts into the life and makeup of the Samurai. This second change brought about the change in suffix from *jutsu* to *do*, meaning *Path* or *Way*. Thus *Iaijutsu* (the art of drawing a sword and striking in one motion) became *Iaido*, *Kenjutsu* (the art of the sword) became *Kendo* (effectively Japanese fencing), *Jiujutsu* (unarmed combat) became *Judo* (type of wrestling and throwing) (Suino, 1994) and *Kyujutsu* (the art of the bow) became *Kyudo* (Hoff, 2002). However, to the Samurai, even in times of constant warfare his most powerful opponent was *himself*. The transition from *Art* to *Way* allowed the Samurai the opportunity for existential investigation of self, Self and the

contexts they existed within, through their art. In martial arts practice this means attaining a state of mastery:

> …so great that it can transcend life and death and react as needed with higher technique. Anyone who, as a result of this achievement, no longer has to reckon with defeat becomes unopposed and loses his enemies. He has reached a state of no-combat. (Hoff, 2002, pp. 5-6)

In the Japanese martial arts there are two concepts which connect spiritual training with martial arts and promote focus, they are *Kiai* and *Zanshin* (Suino, 1994). Kiai is the bringing together and expelling of *Ki* (or *Chi* or *Qi* in Chinese—internal or vital energy) at the moment of a crucial strike. Kiai is often manifested as a shout or stamp but whether this occurs or not the projection of energy should occur at the critical moment. Zanshin means "unbroken concentration" (Stevens, 2001, p. 155) or "reserved spirit" (Suino, 1994, p.109). Zanshin is basically concentration of Ki projected by the advanced practitioner particularly before, or immediately following an attack. It is not arrogance or posturing but controlling the fighting ground through the radiation of greater spiritual power than the opponent (Stevens, 2001; Suino, 1994). The ultimate use of Zanshin is *Kizeme* or 'Ki offensive'. That is dominating using the power of one's Ki, ultimately beating the opponent without striking a blow. This is possible when the technique encompasses the whole being, including the mental state, of the attacker. It would only be possible to defeat a Kizeme expert if his "*ki-ken-tai* (the unity of *ki*-energy, *ken*-the movement of the sword and *tai*-the centre of the body)" were imperfect (Tokitsu, 2004, p. 319). Achievement of Kizeme occurs only when mastery of both sword and Zen are achieved.

As I noted earlier *direct transmission* is an essential aspect of Eastern epistemologies and ontologies and this is equally true in martial arts where, any school or teacher which cannot trace the origins of their style and art to a recognised Grandmaster is viewed with scepticism (James, 2004; Shimabukuro & Pellman, 1995; Stevens, 2001; Suino, 1994; Zhang, 1998). In fact the name of the style I study, *Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu Iaijutsu*, means the *Peerless/Without Equal, Direct Transmission, Eishin Style Sword Art* (Karasulas, 2005; Shimabukuro & Pellman, 1995; Suino, 1994). It was founded between 1601 and 1615 by Hayashizaki Jinsuke Minamoto Shigenobu, who was said to have been given honorific *Tenka Muso* (*No Equal Under Heaven*) by Toyotomi Hideyoshi himself. The system was later codified by the seventh Grandmaster, Hasegawa Chikaranosuke Eishin in the eighteenth century (Karasulas, 2005; Shimabukuro & Pellman, 1995; Suino,

1994). It was recodified into the current curriculum with the addition of extra material by the seventeenth Grandmaster, Oe Masamichi. Our particular school is part of the Yamauchi Ha lineage, named after the eighteenth Grandmaster, Yamauchi Toyotake, and our current Grandmaster is the twenty-first in the lineage. Students would be formally inducted into both the school *and* the extended family or Clan of the Master, proof of which would be provided in writing. For example:
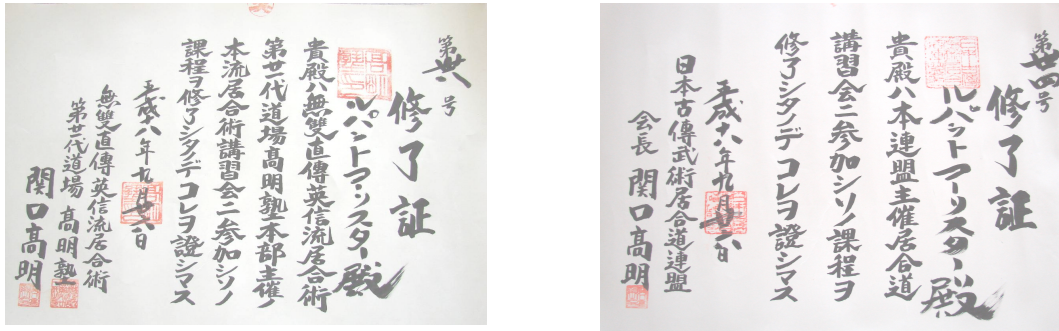

Figure 5.3: School and Clan induction documents (calligraphy by Sekiguchi Takaaki (Komei) 21st Grandmaster - Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu Iaijutsu).

Masters teach by demonstration, repetition and appropriate feedback at critical moments, and typically there is little opportunity for the student to ask questions. Masters generally only give permission to transmit their art to a very few people and this permission would be given in writing (Stevens, 2001; Tokitsu, 2004).

Perhaps the most concise summary of the role of martial arts and spirituality in Eastern ontologies is from Dōshun (Hayashi Razan; 1583-1657) who said:

> To have the arts of peace, but not the arts of war lacks courage. To have the arts of war, but not the arts of peace is to lack wisdom. A man who is dedicated and has a mission is called a Samurai. A man who is of inner worth and upright conduct, who has moral principles and mastery of the arts, he is also called a Samurai. (cited in Irvine, 2000, p. 122)

It should also be remembered that the term 'Samurai' means 'to serve' (Cleary, 2008; Nitobe, 2005; Yamamoto, 2002).

Summary

In this chapter I discussed what I described as Eastern ontologies. Having established the background to my selection of the five traditions or ontologies being explored I then

highlighted the eight observable orientations which emerged from the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of these five ontologies.

Chapter six – Common themes, cosmology and cultural forms

Overview

The previous three chapters in this section comprise the bulk of the literature review for this document. This chapter discusses the limitations of the approach undertaken to the literature review, whilst indicating why it was still an appropriate starting point. It highlights the common themes that were identified from the meta-narratives of Holism, Indigenous cultures and Eastern ontologies. It also provides an interpretation of the interconnected universe and the roles and responsibilities that these meta-narratives appear to ascribe to humanity within that interconnected universe, as far as they can be discerned from the literature review. This chapter then discusses the concepts of *Perennial Philosophy* and *Cosmology*. Finally, it explains how the common themes I previously identified would be more appropriate to be discussed as the visible forms of a culture's cosmology rather than as being *the* single universal, inclusive spiritual truth that is common across spiritual, cultural and religious traditions (Hollick, 2007)—that is as perennial philosophy.

Exploring a participatory approach to a literature review

The literature review resulted from my *immersion* in texts, the purpose of which was to distil elements of wisdom, insight and praxis from a seemingly diverse set of meta-narratives in order to determine the common themes which exist between them, these meta-narratives were Holism, Indigenous cultures and Eastern ontologies. As I noted earlier, the decision to explore these particular meta-narratives emerged from the social, cultural, vocational, educational and spiritual experiences of my life rather than because of any perceived hierarchy in epistemological and ontological approaches. The literature review represents an overview of the knowledge gained during the first phase of this investigation and should not be interpreted as being exhaustive, but rather as being *indicative of certain common themes*, described as eight orientations, that could be discerned within and between the meta-narratives being explored.

The meta-narratives explored are extremely ancient and complex and often rooted in the pre-religious and pre-philosophical times of shamanism (Jacobs, 1998; Ono, 2003; Wong, 1997). This necessarily makes a review of literature problematic since the wisdom, insight

and praxis which is described therein is merely an abstracted representation of a culture's ontological, epistemological, axiological, rhetorical and methodological understandings. Such cultural understandings are sensual and experiential in nature and have been handed down from generation to generation throughout the centuries. These understandings have inevitably absorbed social, cultural, spiritual and environmental influences from the culture's complex contexts, as well as diverse influences from outside those contexts originating from before the understandings were first written down. The problematic issue for me as a modern investigator, conducting such a review of literature, is also the same issue that the original transcribers faced, that is, how can such sensual and experiential understandings adequately be described in text? This is a perennial issue because any textual, or even verbal, description of such understandings can never fully convey the sensual experience had by any given individual or culture as they are unique (conversations with Crowell, 2007; London, 2007). There is no true universality in experience, although there can be similarities or common themes which may be able to be identified (conversations with Crowell, 2007; London, 2007). The abstraction and representation of any such understandings is exacerbated by the need to conform to a predetermined, text-based linguistic framework simply in order to be written down. This abstraction is further distanced from the original experience by repeated transcription over time and then distanced again by translation into other languages. Depending on when the transcription or translation was made, for what purpose and by whom, this practice can lead to a range of results, from the overlaying of the original meaning with the rhetorical and axiological focus of the transcriber, translator or sponsor to outright misinterpretation (Grigg, 1995).

Because of my prior experience with the meta-narratives being explored (as discussed in Chapter two) I was cognisant of the challenges associated with using texts such as these. I immersed myself in texts originating from writers, thinkers and practitioners in the areas of Holism and holistic epistemologies. I immersed myself in the writings of Indigenous peoples themselves as much as possible, and where this was not possible in the writings of those respected by the Indigenous community. Finally, I also immersed myself in, 'first generation' translations of Eastern texts as much as possible, sometimes utilising more than one translation of the same text for clarity. These texts generally originated from practitioners of the various traditions being explored. During this process I asked myself whether the resultant literature review would actually be an exploration of Holism,

Indigenous cultures and Eastern ontologies, and I was forced to conclude that it would not. This approach could be seen, then, as a weakness. However, this investigation and its resultant document are rooted in the epistemologically, ontologically, axiologically, rhetorically and methodologically transformative experiences of my life. As such, the literature review should be understood for what it is—simply, a unique representation of the connections and relationships that I made through my *experience* of *immersion with* the texts and a step in the *ongoing shift in consciousness* that is contributing to the epistemological, ontological, axiological, rhetorical and methodological transformation I am experiencing. As Heron says:

> [a person's] experience is subjective and mediated because [they] shape it within [their] context, including [their] intersubjective social context and [their] participation in nature and cosmos – the field of interbeing. It is objective and immediate because through it [they] meet and touch what there is, given Being. Provided [they] have followed sound procedures for having a well-grounded experience, then [their] account of that experience is not only subjective and relative to its context. For it can at the same time lay claim to be a relatively valid perspective on what is objective and universal. (1998, p. 15)

As noted in Chapter three, the ontological, epistemological, axiological, rhetorical and methodological understandings which I have developed during my life are central to the formulation of these chapters and, ultimately, this completed document (Creswell, 1998).

Critics of this kind of approach raise concerns of validity, suggesting that there is an arbitrary benchmark that work such as this can be judged against. However, given that there is effectively no meta-context which can be described as objective reality since all realities are a function of the tension between the subjugation and emancipation of mind (Skolimowski, 1994), there can be no objectivity in any research or investigation. So if reality is a fluid concept and objectivity is at best illusory, there can never really be an objective judgment of validity for a work such as this which is rooted in an individual and unique experience. However, since I have been engaged in an investigation of a harmonious ontology which could facilitate the conditions for holistic, transformative epistemologies within the structures of a community with a view to creating a sustainable future for all beings, then some agreement on the understandings, assumptions and working theories which appear in this document is probably necessary in order that serious discussion can occur around that possibility.

In the field of qualitative inquiry such a need for validity has largely been converted into the need for credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility "refers to the truth as known,

experienced or deeply felt by the people being studied" (Leininger, 1994, p. 105). In Chapter two, I suggested that to a lesser or greater degree I have a relationship with the meta-narratives which I explored in the literature review. Skolimowski would describe this relationship as empathy. Empathy can exist on many levels "from the experience of loving and being loved…[to] deep experiences of great works of art…empathy is a form of positive identification, a positive participation" (1994, p. 163). The experiences I described as epistemologically and ontologically transformative in Chapter two enabled this empathy within me. They removed the constraints of rationality and objectivity enabling me to undertake a document that I would unhesitantly describe as *Participatory* following the characteristics attributed to *Participatory Research* by Skolimowski himself, that is:

- the art of *communion* with the object of enquiry
- the art of learning to use *its* language
- the art of *using* its language
- the art of *talking* to the object of the enquiry
- the art of penetrating from *within*
- the art of *in-dwelling* in the other
- the art of *imaginative hypothesis* which leads to the art of identification
- the art of *transformation of one's consciousness* so that it becomes part of the consciousness of the other [author's emphasis]. (1994, pp. 160-161)

Participatory research, of what might be described as the *Sacred* (Heron, 1998) and which is undertaken with others from the start, could be appropriately described as *Co-operative Inquiry* (Heron, 1996). However, my investigation *emerged* from my *participation with* the universe through ontologically, epistemologically, axiologically, rhetorically and methodologically transformative experiences and this participation is participation within the *widest possible context of humanity's existence*—the holarchy of the universe and beyond. In order to ground the investigation and begin the serious discussion referred to earlier, I used collaborative conversations with writers, thinkers and practitioners across the fields associated with the meta-narratives being explored to crystallise and deepen the understandings, assumptions and working theories which had emerged for me during my immersion in the texts.

Common themes

My immersion in a great many texts over a number of years allowed me to take an iterative and reflective approach to the literature review. Eventually this immersive, iterative and reflective approach yielded a number of common themes within and between the meta-narratives being explored which I described in Chapters three, four and five as eight orientations. To reiterate, they are:

- cosmology and spirituality
- nature
- myth, story and legend
- aesthetics

- contemplative activity
- learning
- community and leadership
- physical activity

The identification of these common themes or orientations should not be taken as dismissing or oversimplifying the complexity of the ontological, epistemological, axiological, rhetorical and methodological holons which are encapsulated in these meta-narratives. Neither should these orientations be understood as inferring that all epistemologies that might be described as holistic, or all cultures that might be described as Indigenous, or all ontologies that might be described as originating in the East, are the same. Their inclusion in the literature review should simply be understood as highlighting:

> …unity and diversity…[that is] a principle that operates when you take a real close look at relationships within…communities…you can see that there is a diversity of…life, each is unique and ha[s] evolved in certain kinds of ways in response to th[eir] environment but underlying it all or on top of it all there are some unifying principles that each of those diverse entities respond to, react to. (conversation with Cajete, 2006)

It should be noted that the delineation of these orientations is used for explanatory purposes only. Holistic epistemologies, Indigenous cultures and Eastern ontologies are rooted in the full development of whole human beings within the widest possible contexts of their existence. However, the fact that I was able to discern common themes within and between the meta-narratives explored through immersion and reflection is, in and of itself, perhaps enough to suggest that there is a timeless or ubiquitous source of wisdom, insight and praxis which can perennially be accessed by humanity under the appropriate conditions. Given that these common themes are evident not only *within* each meta-narrative but also *across the whole* investigation undeniably suggests that it is a concept worth serious attention, especially since humanity has, arguably been returning to

this perennial, timeless, or ubiquitous source of wisdom, insight and praxis periodically for, between five thousand and fifty thousand years.

Each of the meta-narratives being discussed is unique, and indeed, even within each meta-narrative each of the epistemologies, cultures and ontologies is also unique. However, within and across each of these meta-narratives are two meta-themes which I will explore in the remainder of this chapter. They are 'the interconnected universe' and 'the roles and responsibilities the meta-narratives being discussed appear to ascribe to humanity within that interconnected universe'.

The interconnected universe

It is undeniable that within and across the meta-narratives being explored, exists a cosmology which embeds humanity in the "numinous dynamics" (Swimme, 1996, p. 31) of the universe. This cosmology is an *ontological and epistemological holon* which acknowledges, appreciates and celebrates not only the innumerable connections and relationships between every single entity, experience, event and phenomenon within and beyond the known universe, but also the *mystery* inherent in those connections and relationships through the *vital energy* with which they are imbued and which is the very essence of life. This acknowledgement, appreciation and celebration accepts the universe as holographic (Bohm, 1980; Talbot, 1991; Wilber, 1982b). I will discuss the holographic nature of the universe more in Chapter ten.

Within these meta-narratives also exists an *axiological and methodological holon* which acknowledges, appreciates and celebrates the fact that all life, entities, relationships, experiences and phenomena are sacred. This axiological and methodological holon acknowledges, appreciates and celebrates the possibility that the universe not only contains all that is known and all that can be known, but also that it contains all that is unknown and all which can never be known. Furthermore it acknowledges, appreciates and celebrates the possibility that each of these aspects impacts on every entity, relationship, experience and phenomena within the universe constantly, without needing to intellectualise, formalise, rationalise, or analyse this possibility. This acknowledgement, appreciation and celebration ensures that there is balance and harmony in the actions and relationships that humanity, as it exists within these meta-narratives, has with the multiple holarchies of which it is part.

Finally, within these meta-narratives also exists a *rhetorical holon* which is informed by both the ontological and epistemological holon, and the axiological and methodological holon, noted above. This rhetorical holon acknowledges, appreciates and celebrates the holarchical and holographic nature of existence by providing a language which is not constrained by the academy, or by text-based linguistic forms. The rhetoric of these meta-narratives includes, but is not limited to, the embodied, sensuous, instinctual, emotional, soulful and the vital. This rhetorical holon is manifested through initiation, celebration, ritual, dance, song, music, art, design, myth, story, legend, contemplation, work, play, consensus, teaching, conversation, service, community and mindful living.

Each of these holons is continually manifested in the unfolding, enfolding and evolving of the lives of individuals, families, communities and societies within each of the meta-narratives and in their active participation in the co-creation of the universe.

Roles and responsibilities

The meta-narratives discussed in the preceding three chapters are essentially holarchies of ontological, epistemological, axiological, rhetorical and methodological holons which encompass balance and harmony, mutuality and reciprocity, consensus and diversity, feeling and *Seeing* (see Krishnamurti, 1994a, p. 28), *Being*, *Doing* and *Becoming*, wisdom, insight and praxis, *Awe* and wonder, meaning and patterns, complexity and simplicity, unity and diversity, structure and content, engagement and reflection, caring and compassion, empathy and imagination, vision and focus and service and responsibility. They hold that everything that is done or not done, any decision that is made or not made, any action that is taken or not taken, anything that is said or not said, and everything that is known and unknown affects everything else in the holarchy of the universe and beyond.

For the cultures and societies which embody the cosmology of the holarchical and holographic existence described above, this existence is not passive—it is *active*. Such cultures and societies, which have often been viewed from within the Western worldview as primitive, are actually socially, culturally and cosmologically sophisticated. This sophistication reveals itself in the roles and responsibilities which these cultures and societies ascribe to humanity and which are rooted in the understanding that each individual, family, community, society and culture are constantly *actively engaged* in maintaining the balance and harmony of the multiple holarchies of which they are part.

Such roles and responsibilities are also rooted in the understanding that this engagement ultimately ensures the balance and harmony of the holarchy of universe and beyond.

As can be seen from the discussion in Chapters three, four and five, in their so-called pure forms the cultures and societies which exist within the meta-narratives explored are non-hierarchical in the modern interpretation of the word, although they are holarchical as described by Koestler (1967) and others. This means that the perceptions which are inherent in the Western worldview regarding the importance and power of humanity are not privileged therein. Instead, these meta-narratives require the *embodiment* of what are referred to elsewhere as key qualities (McLaughlin & Davidson, 2008), universal values (Hollick, 2007), or virtues (Jacobs & Jacobs-Spencer, 2001). Some of these key qualities, universal values, or virtues are:

• balance	• benevolence	• civility	• collaboration
• compassion	• cooperation	• courage	• devotion
• discipline	• empathy	• fairness	• faith
• fortitude	• freedom	• friendliness	• frugality
• generosity	• happiness	• harmony	• honesty
• honour	• humility	• humour	• integrity
• intuition	• joy	• justice	• love
• loyalty	• non-attachment	• non-violence	• openness
• patience	• peace	• politeness	• preservation of nature
• reason	• reflection	• respect	• responsibility
• responsiveness	• reverence for life	• self-control	• self-respect
• service	• simplicity	• sincerity	• social harmony
• temperance	• tolerance	• trust	• truth
• unity	• vocation	• wisdom	

(adapted from Breuninger & Messow, 2008; Cajete, 1994; Dennett, 1991; Flanagan, 1992; Jacobs & Jacobs-Spencer, 2001; McLaughlin & Davidson, 2008; Nitobe, 2005; Reanney, 1994; Ywahoo, 1987).

Such key qualities, values or virtues are formed into ontological holons (complex ways of being), that is, culturally and contextually specific, if largely unwritten, "code[s] of moral principles" (Nitobe, 2005, p. 3). These codes of principles have also been called the

practicing of "a virtuous, balanced way" (Jacobs & Jacobs-Spencer, 2001, p. xiii), or what the Dalai Lama calls, secular values (cited in Hart, 2006). These ontological holons are, what I have come to call, the embodiment of a *Harmonious Ontology*. A harmonious ontology is shaped by the wisdom, insight and praxis which are inherent in cultural forms including the traditions, rituals and aesthetics of a culture or society. A harmonious ontology shapes how an individual acts, both in and of themselves and in communion with the wider context of their existence.

On one level, within the magnitude and complexity of the timeless, infinite, holarchical and holographic universe, humanity is seemingly insignificant. On another level, human beings are simply another of the myriad of forms of life within that complexity. Whilst on yet another level, humanity is arguably the first form of life which, not only has the ability to knowingly destroy itself en-masse, but also has the ability to destroy the holarchy of which it is most immediately part, the Earth (Henderson & Ikeda, 2004; Laszlo, 2006b; Laszlo & Currivan, 2008; O'Sullivan, 1999). For the cultures and societies which exist within those meta-narratives all the above points of view are inadequate and reductionist, since for them all entities, relationships, experiences and phenomena in the holarchy of the universe and beyond have an *equal role* in maintaining the balance and harmony of that holarchy.

Perennial philosophy

As I noted in Chapter one, it is necessary to explore to the concept of *Perennial Philosophy* since it could possibly be seen as reflecting my aim to explore the interconnected nature of the universe, and the roles and responsibilities that the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of Holism, Indigenous cultures and Eastern ontologies appear to ascribe to humanity within that interconnected universe.

The origins of modern articulations of perennial philosophy can be traced back as far as Philo of Alexandria and St. Augustine (Ferrer, 2002). However, it was in the renaissance that the term itself first appeared, when Steuco referred to the *philosophia priscorium* work of Ficino (Ferrer, 2002; Miller, 2006a). It was Ficino who had attempted to develop a "unifying philosophical system based on the synthesise of Platonic principles and Christian doctrines" (Ferrer, 2002, p. 73). As such, the initial articulations of a perennial philosophy in the Western academy were firmly rooted in the Western worldview and aimed to

synthesise a multitude of variations on Western worldviews into one (Schmitt, 1966). However, the term *Philosophia Perennis* was also used by such philosophers as Leibniz, Jaspers and Radhakrishnan who reconceptualised it as "a world philosophy, a synthesis of East and West" (Ferrer, 2002, p. 73). Common to these various philosophers and philosophies is the notion that "all religions point in their various ways to Spirit, the source of all existence [and] that mystical practices can lead to a knowledge of Spirit that is free of linguistic, cultural and doctrinal biases" (Hollick, 2007, p. 340).

Despite the long history of perennialism in philosophical circles it is also necessary to acknowledge the more recent work of Aldous Huxley, since it was he who popularised the term *Perennial Philosophy* in his 1945 book of the same name. Huxley was born in England in 1894. Although he was educated in the formal English settings of Eton and Oxford, he is described as a spiritual seeker (Nakagawa, 2002), whose searching led him to explore such activities as the Bates Method and the Alexander Technique as well as to meet the philosopher and thinker, Jiddu Krishnamurti. Huxley describes perennial philosophy as:

> …the metaphysic that recognises a divine Reality substantial to the world of things and lives and minds; the psychology that finds in the soul something similar to, or even identical to the divine Reality; the ethic that places man's final end in the knowledge of the immanent and transcendent Ground of all being—the thing immemorial and universal. (Huxley, 1945, p. vii)

Huxley's concept of perennial philosophy articulates that the single source of *Truth* noted earlier can be found in the "mystical teachings of the world's religious traditions" (Ferrer, 2002, p. 74), noting it is a synthesis from "…the traditionary lore of primitive peoples [sic] in every region of the world and…every one of the higher religions [sic]" (Huxley, 1945, p. vii). He says:

> …the Perennial Philosophy is primarily concerned with the one, divine Reality substantial to the manifold world of things and lives and minds. But the nature of this one Reality is such that it cannot be directly and immediately apprehended except by those who have chosen to fulfill certain conditions, making themselves loving, pure in heart and poor in spirit. (1945, p. viii)

Ferrer notes that "modern perennialists maintain not only the existence of an experiential contemplative consensus about the nature of reality, but also the objective truth of such a vision" (2002, p. 74). They believe that this objective reality can be accessed through a

range of contemplative practices an assertion which critics of perennialism, Heron (1998) and Ferrer (2002) in particular, take issue with. Essentially perennialists believe that:

- the universe originates in and was created from, Spirit,
- there is a hierarchy of ontological and axiological understandings where the higher levels are closer to the spirit and therefore more real,
- there is a hierarchy of epistemology where again the higher levels provide more knowledge of spirit and therefore reveal more about reality (Ferrer, 2002, pp. 75-76).

Modern philosopher and most recent populariser of perennialism, Ken Wilber, describes it thus "… reality is a Great Holarchy of being and consciousness, reaching from matter to life to mind to spirit. Each dimension transcends and includes its junior dimension in the nested holarchy" (Wilber, 2000a, pp. 31-32). However, a holarchy is a non-relativistic hierarchy where neither power nor importance are privileged (Koestler, 1967) and although each level of the holarchy does transcend the previous level, the notion of one level being closer to 'Reality', or closer to 'Spirit' introduces an element of relative importance which seems to run counter to the essence of Koestler's concept of holarchy. It is also interesting that perennialists suggest that their philosophy is tolerant and inclusive whilst simultaneously attempting to establish it as the single spiritual 'Truth' against which all other traditions should be judged (Hollick, 2007). This kind of exclusivist stance is essentially the same as that which might be observed in not just the fundamentalist, but even in the formalised, institutionalised, hierarchical and authoritarian forms of any of the established religions (Ferrer, 2002; Heron, 1998; Hollick, 2007).

Critics of perennial philosophy note that these exclusive tendencies:

> …limit the evolution of consciousness and spirituality to a path defined and established by Spirit. It leaves no room for creative emergence of new forms and assumes that the ancient spiritual Masters fully explored and defined all levels of human consciousness and spiritual potential. Only the trappings of religion can be changed; Spirit and Spirituality are fixed. (Hollick, 2007, pp. 341-342)

They also note that the extreme focus on transcending the earthly life denigrates and marginalises humanity's earthly existence (Hollick, 2007) and the immediate holarchy of which it is part.

The concept of perennial philosophy as being *the only* universal, inclusive spiritual truth also has implications for diversity and balance and for the individual's unique experience

of their spiritual tradition (Ferrer, 2002; Heron, 1996, 1998; Hollick, 2007). This concept is fundamentally contrary to the ontological, epistemological, axiological, rhetorical and methodological underpinnings of my investigation and this document and is therefore an inappropriate concept to base an investigation of a harmonious ontology upon. As such, in the remainder of this chapter I have turned to the concept of *Cosmology*.

Cosmology

I have previously discussed the worldviews as being human constructs and systems of beliefs or understandings that humanity uses to make sense of its existence and as Tarnas says, "worldviews create worlds" (2006, p. 16). The evolution of the dominant Western worldview has brought it to a point where it is distinguished by the "fundamental tendency to assert and experience a radical separation between subject and object" (Tarnas, 2006, p. 16). This tendency separates the individual, family, community or society from the multiple and complex contexts they exist within. The nature of this document and the context within which it has been written demands an epistemological framework where this natural tendency does not exist. I hereafter describe this framework as *Cosmology* and after Oliver and Gershman (1989), I see Cosmology as embracing "all fields of knowing" (p. 55), all the "various domains of the universe" (p. 56) and all the "appropriate relationships between humans and the natural world [and] between humans and other humans" (p. 57). Cosmology brings together all that has ever been, all that is, and all that ever will be in an endless trans-dimensional, trans-contextual and trans-temporal holarchy. A holarchy which means that "the world is animated by the same [vital energy, the same] psychologically resonant realities that human beings experience within themselves…[and which] continually extend from the interior world of the human [through] the world outside" (Tarnas, 2006, p. 16) to the universe and beyond, another example of the holographic nature of the universe and of humanity's holographic existence. Cosmology allows humanity to participate fully in the infinite, holarchical and holographic universe in ways that are both tangible and intangible (Oliver & Gershman, 1989; Swimme, 1996; Tarnas, 2006). Finally, cosmology not only allows the consciousness of the individual to co-create the consciousness of the family, community, society and the whole of humanity, but also to co-create the timeless and non-linear consciousness of the universe (Bache, 2008; Bohm, 1980, 1994; Laszlo, 2006c, 2007, 2008b, 2006d; Laszlo & Currivan, 2008; Laszlo et al., 2003; McTaggart, 2008a; Talbot, 1991). Oliver and Gershman say

cosmology "understands that one is involved in a presence of immanent creation—the creation of oneself in an interrelated universe of which we are part. We are *in* each new pulse of creation" (1989, pp. 57-58).

This understanding of cosmology is entirely consistent with the cosmologies inherent in the meta-narratives explored in the preceding three chapters. It is also consistent with the understanding that the eight orientations highlighted in the previous three chapters are simply the visible forms (conversation with Yoshida, 2006) of a culture's cosmology. Oliver and Gershman (1989) again say "cultural cosmology…is grounded in [a] specific context…[an] intuitive experience which connects it to a sense of the sacred" (p. 60) noting it is this connection which "implies a universality" (p. 60) in experience. It is this implication which leads to the unfounded comparison with perennial philosophy, however, as was noted earlier, each experience is unique. The 'universality' of cosmology is simply that all beings, entities, relationships, experiences and phenomena are holons and holarchies within the holarchy of the universe and beyond. The meta-narratives explored herein, though unique, all acknowledge, appreciate and celebrate this holarchy which I describe as universal oneness. It is important to note that oneness is not a synonym for sameness but rather "stresses an integrity and interrelatedness of all being…There is only one fundamental nature" (Oliver & Gershman, 1989, p. 103). As such, it is possible to discern not only common themes which relate to the cultural forms exhibited within each of the meta-narratives but also a convergence of understandings which are common to not only these meta-narratives, but also to the epistemologies, ontologies and axiologies within them.

The immersive, iterative and reflective approach undertaken during Phase one of this investigation (Sections one and two of this document) led me to discern the following convergence of understandings:

- The universe is an interconnected whole and everything exists in relationship to everything else – a holarchy.
- The universe is holographic, that is, in the smallest moment of time, in the most insignificant interaction, or in the most basic entity (both the animate and the seemingly non-animate), can be observed and experienced all the wonders and intricacies of the universe – the whole.
- The holarchical and holographic universe exists in non-linear time.

- The holarchy of the holographic universe and non-linear time contains infinite wisdom, insight and praxis.

- All entities, relationships, experiences and phenomena in the holarchical and holographic universe are imbued with the same vital energy.

- Humanity encapsulates inherent spirituality.

- Humanity can continually renew its connection with the infinite wisdom, insight and praxis contained in the holarchical and holographic universe.

- Humanity honours and renews its connection to the holarchical and holographic universe through celebration, ritual and aesthetics.

- Realising the holarchical and holographic nature of the universe and accessing the infinite wisdom, insight and praxis therein cannot be achieved by intellectual means alone.

- Connection with the holarchical and holographic universe and the infinite wisdom, insight and praxis contained therein *can* be achieved:

  Through *deep engagement* with:

  - a great teacher, *and*

  - a range of culturally-specific texts (the use of the word 'texts' here should be understood to include any kind of written, oral and visual sources), *and*

  - the immediate and complex contexts within which the individual, family, community, or society exist, *and*

  - the holarchical and holographic universe itself.

  Through *deep reflection* on:

  - the many and varied experiences *with* the entities, relationships, experiences and phenomena, both within and outside of their immediate contexts, *and*

  - the mystery of the universe and the vital energy inherent therein.

  However in order for this connection to truly occur this deep engagement and deep reflection need to be combined with dedication, patience and commitment as well as adoption of an appropriate lifestyle and attitude.

- The relationship with the infinite wisdom, insight and praxis contained in the holarchical and holographic universe guides the individual, family, community and society in their relationships with each other, and with the other entities,

relationships, experiences and phenomena within the holarchical and holographic universe both animate and seemingly non-animate.

- All the entities, relationships, experiences and phenomena of the holarchical and holographic universe, both animate and seemingly non-animate, are sacred.
- The balance of the holarchical and holographic universe is maintained through complex systems of honourable and virtuous action and non-action rooted in sapience (insight and wisdom) and praxis (practice and reflection).

The remainder of this chapter explores the concept that there is a common and timeless ontology contained within the meta-narratives explored and that this ontology may be better described as *Ubiquitous Sapience*.

Ubiquitous Sapience

As has been discussed, in each of the meta-narratives explored humanity has a role in maintaining the balance and harmony of the holarchical and holographic universe. Thus in ancient times, wise people developed cultural codes of practice which ensured the sustainability of the multiple and complex contexts within which the culture was situated. In order to ensure this sustainability, these codes of practice not only provided guidance for sustainable practices at individual, familial, communal and societal levels but they also provided specific cultural forms which enabled the people to both honour and connect with, not only their immediate context (culture), their wider context (environment) and their broadest context (the holarchical and infinite universe), but also their past (including and their ancestors) and their future. It is this connection (and the sense of non-linear time which originates in the holarchical and holographic universe) that provides a portal into the wisdom, insight and praxis contained therein.

Because humanity is naturally part of the holarchical and holographic universe it should inherently recognise the wisdom, insight and praxis contained therein. This wisdom, insight and praxis is not hidden, nor is it only revealed periodically, or only to a chosen few. It is constant, everywhere, all the time—*Ubiquitous*. However, centuries of cultural conditioning have clouded the minds of the people which inhabit the Western worldview, so much so that the wisdom, insight and praxis which is both within the people and within the holarchical *and* holographic universe has become inaccessible. To guard against this, the cultures situated within the meta-narratives explored developed cultural forms which

systematically remove the obscurity and allowed this wisdom, insight and praxis to be regained. That said, simply regaining wisdom and insight is not enough. The cultural codes of conduct require that both ensuring the sustainability of the culture and maintaining the balance and harmony of the universe is an active and mindful process which cannot be undertaken alone. So it is essential that those who have regained wisdom and insight, what we might call the Enlightened, Awakened, Kami, Immortals, Elders, Sages, Shamans, Mystics or the Wise, actively use their wisdom and insight—*Sapience*, to inform their praxis through the adoption of appropriate attitudes and lifestyle in the service of their family, community, society and ultimately therefore, the holarchy of the Earth.

The processes of engaging in a mindful or engaged existence and of regaining sapience and thence utilising that sapience, are inherently epistemological. The holarchical and holographic universe teaches those who have regained sapience how to maintain balance and harmony. Cultural codes of conduct translate sapience, balance and harmony into everyday practices. These practices are passed from generation to generations through the epistemological processes of initiation, ceremony, ritual, celebration and aesthetics, and through societal and cultural structures, including the roles encompassed therein. Within these cosmologies and associated cultural codes of conduct there is no separation between learning and life. Learning is life and life is learning. The holarchy of the universe provides individuals, families, communities and societies with the tools to reflect on, interpret and utilise the embodied wisdom, insight and praxis of their culture and the complex contexts it exists within.

Summary

The aim of this chapter has not been to infer that the meta-narratives being discussed are the same or interchangeable, but that there are common themes that emerge through immersion in the texts associated with each. In synthesising the common themes for this chapter I have included information that relates to the common themes that I have identified and discarded, or at least chosen not to include, that information which does not relate to those common themes. I am mindful that I have not discussed equally the negative aspects of the meta-narratives which occurred throughout history. These omissions are intentional, because each of them can be attributed to a deviation from, or bastardisation of, the cultural codes of conduct which flow from their cosmologies; a phenomenon which can be observed in the zealotry, fundamentalism, institutionalisation

and excess religiosity even today in some of the world's dominant spiritual or religious traditions.

Section three: Collaboration and crystallisation

Chapter seven – Collaborative conversations

Overview

This section comprises three chapters. Chapter seven details the process of my engagement in collaborative conversations with leading writers, thinkers and practitioners in the areas of Holism, Indigenous cultures, Eastern ontologies, community development, adult and community education, holistic education, transformative learning, sustainability, spirituality, personal transformation and vocational education and training. The decision to choose these areas was as a result of the underpinning work I completed as part of my undergraduate and previous postgraduate study.

Chapter eight explores the new or clarified understandings, assumptions and working theories that evolved for me through the experience of the collaborative conversation process.

Chapter nine describes the archetypes and the structures that may synthesise the roles and responsibilities that the meta-narratives explored appear to ascribe to humanity within the interconnected universe. It explores the role that holistic, transformative epistemologies could have in relation to those potential archetypes and structures, which together form what I describe as a *Harmonious Ontology*. Finally, it describes how a harmonious ontology could have the potential to facilitate a sustainable future for all beings.

Crystallisation

The aim of this investigation was to identify sources of wisdom, insight and praxis which may assist humanity to create a vision for its future which was sustainable, not only for humanity itself, but also the immediate holarchy it exists within, the Earth. I articulated this aim as investigating a harmonious ontology which could facilitate the conditions for holistic, transformative epistemologies within the structures of a community with a view to creating a sustainable future for all beings.

The *immersive*, *iterative* and *reflective* nature of this investigation (as discussed in Chapters one and six) was inherently *Participative* (Skolimowski, 1994) in the widest sense of the term, that is, participation in the holarchy of the universe. It allowed me to be in "*communion* with the object of enquiry" (the meta-narratives). It allowed me to

"learn…to use *its* language", and it allowed me to explore "the art of [actually] *using* its language". The immersive and *collaborative* nature of the research allowed me to "*talk*…to the object of the enquiry" and to "penetrate[e] from *within*" allowing me to experience the "*in-dwelling* in the other". This *immersion*, *reflection* and *collaboration* allowed me to develop a unique epistemological holon which led to the development of an "*imaginative hypothesis* which [in turn] le[d] to the art of identification" of the common themes within and between the meta-narratives being explored. It also led to the articulation of the interconnected nature of the universe as it appeared from my experience of immersion within those meta-narratives. It led to the articulation of the roles and responsibilities that the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of those meta-narratives may ascribe to humanity within that interconnected universe. Finally, this immersion, reflection and collaboration enabled the further "*transformation of* [my] *consciousness*" and the completion of this document will allow this transformation to "become part of the consciousness of the other" (original author's emphasis retained, adapted from Skolimowski, 1994, pp. 160-161).

Phase three of this investigation (Phase one being conceptualisation, contextualisation and grounding, and Phase two being the development of understandings, assumptions and working theories following immersion in the texts) subjected the understandings, assumptions and working theories I had developed to self- and peer-reflection through use of the crystallisation tool (previously known as triangulation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005)) of interviews. However, in order to retain the collaborative (Heron, 1996) and participatory (Skolimowski, 1994) nature of the study I reconceptualised the interviews as *Collaborative Conversations*. These conversations were undertaken with leading writers, thinkers and practitioners across fields related to the meta-narratives being explored. This reconceptualisation was based on the understanding that no "person can set themselves up as an external authority who defines the nature of internal authority for other people" (Heron, 1996, p. 50). That is, I did not undertake the collaborative conversation process in order to gain consensus from the aforementioned writers, thinkers and practitioners for the understandings, assumptions and working theories I had developed, which would infer an epistemological and ontological hierarchy, but rather to *co-create a deeper understanding* through the *act* and *experience* of collaborative conversations. To that end I hereafter describe these writers, thinkers and practitioners as *Co-creators* rather than as Participants, Subjects or Interviewees.

Co-creators

As was mentioned earlier, the co-creators were approached because:

- they are some of the leading writers, thinkers and practitioners in fields which are related to either, the meta-narratives being explored, or to the aim of this investigation, *and*
- some of the literature review relies on their published texts, *and*
- the aim of the collaborative conversations was to explore the common themes identified within and between, the meta-narratives and to provide crystallisation and deeper understanding of the understandings, assumptions and working theories that emerged from my immersion in the texts.

All the co-creators approached agreed to take part and all agreed to the statements in the consent form. Two of the co-creators (interviewed together) requested that if material from their conversation were to be used in the document or subsequent documents that they be allowed to see, review and, if need be clarify, their meaning. Co-creators are fully identified and credited in this document and extracts from the collaborative conversations are utilised throughout. For clarity these extracts are clearly identified as originating in the collaborative conversation process rather than simply being other forms of personal communication or discussion which occurred outside the conversation process.

Co-creators were able review the transcript of the conversation of which they were part at any time and they were asked to approve the final transcript, although not everybody responded when asked for this approval. A lack of response was given to mean that tacit approval of the transcript had been given. Co-creators will each receive a copy of the complete information gathered during the investigation as well as a copy of the final document. Not all of those who initially agreed to contribute to the research ultimately took part, largely due to scheduling and communication difficulties.

An exploration of Indigenous cultures was a key component of the investigation and conversations were carried out with Indigenous people from the United States, Canada, KwaZulu Natal (Southern Africa) and Australia, as well as Non-Indigenous people from Canada, the United States, Southern Africa, Japan and Australia. Co-creators were contacted because of their particular expertise and experiences in fields related to the

meta-narratives being explored, rather than as archetypal representatives of their culture, tradition, or ontology, either specifically or generically.

Co-creators were either previously known to me personally or referred to me by someone who was known to me. Many of the co-creators are colleagues whom I have known for some time through professional networking. I sought to converse with them because of their personal experiences, wisdom, insight and praxis as well as the work they undertake, rather than as representatives of their particular organisations, therefore I did not contact the organisations for permission to undertake the conversations. Initial contact was made by email or letter and subsequent contact occurred via email and telephone.

Co-creators and their areas of experience, wisdom, insight, and praxis were:

Co-creators	Location	Holistic education	Indigenous cultures	Eastern ontologies	Community development	Sustainability	Transformative learning	Spirituality	Personal transformation	Social capital	Adult and community education	Vocational education and training
Anne Goodman	Toronto					✓	✓				✓	
Atsuhiko Yoshida	Osaka	✓		✓				✓				
Bernie Tierney	West Wyalong		✓								✓	✓
Bob London	California	✓		✓				✓	✓		✓	
Clementine Yeni and Christina Ngaloshe and Theo Nyawose (*)	Durban	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓			✓	
Damon Anderson	Melbourne					✓		✓		✓		✓
Edmund O'Sullivan	Toronto					✓	✓		✓		✓	

Co-creators	Location	Holistic education	Indigenous cultures	Eastern ontologies	Community development	Sustainability	Transformative learning	Spirituality	Personal transformation	Social capital	Adult and community education	Vocational education and training
Gregory Cajete	Santa Fe		✓			✓	✓	✓		✓		
Griff Foley (*)	Merewether									✓	✓	✓
Isabella Colalillo-Kates	Toronto	✓						✓	✓			
Jack Miller	Toronto	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓			
Joan Connelly (*)	Durban	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓			✓	
John Dirkx	Michigan						✓	✓	✓		✓	
Michael and Judie Bopp	Calgary		✓		✓	✓			✓	✓		
Nancy Cooper	Saskatchewan		✓		✓				✓		✓	
Sam Crowell	Malibu	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓		✓	
Sarres Padayachee and Clementine Yeni (*)	Durban	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓			✓	
Stephen Jeanetta	Missouri				✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	
Theo Nyawose and Jerome Gumede (*)	Durban	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓			✓	
Tobin Hart	Georgia	✓					✓	✓	✓			
Yoshiharu Nakagawa	Kyoto	✓		✓				✓				

Approach to the collaborative conversation process

The collaborative conversations were examples of holistic inquiry since they were "grounded in [the]…participative knowing [and] interplay within the co-inquirers… thought[s] and experience[s]" (Heron, 1996, p. 16). Conversations took place over a period of six months and were carried out in face-to-face situations as much as possible (nine conversations were conducted this way), and via telephone where travel costs proved to be prohibitive (twelve conversations were conducted this way, five of the conversations could not be transcribed due to the poor quality of recordings, these conversations are indicated with an asterisk (*) in the list above). There were another eight people who agreed to collaborate with me in this investigation but convenient times could not be found for the conversations to occur. Conversations were recorded using a digital recording device and I took occasional hand written notes where possible, although I found it difficult to concentrate on the co-creator's answers and make notes at the same time. I later abandoned note taking almost entirely for a more sensual and experiential approach which allowed for deeper engagement and presence on my part during the conversations.

The format of the conversations was semi-structured and involved constant self- and peer-reflection both in regard to my evolving understandings, assumptions and working theories as well as the outcomes of each specific conversation and, in the case of latter conversations, previous ones. This continual immersion and reflection allowed me to clarify, refine and deepen my understandings, assumptions and working theories in an iterative manner in relation to the aims of my investigation. The collaborative conversation format was chosen in order to allow free-ranging conversation that was not constrained by a fixed set of questions. Such free-ranging tendencies are typical in conversations and tend to evolve naturally in a range of participatory investigations (Clandinin & Connelly, 2001) since "the conditions under which the [conversations] take place…shape them" (2001, p. 110) and participatory investigations tend to have a less formal atmosphere. Conversations generally took place in either the workplace or home of the co-creator, with one taking place in a hotel and one in a café. Conversations usually comprised one session of between forty-five minutes and two hours, although this was not always the case. Notable exceptions were conversations carried out in the co-creator's home or in a hotel where the conversations ranged over a wider time span. Clandinin and Connelly say "the way in which an researcher acts, questions and responds in an interview shapes the relationship

and therefore the ways participants respond and give accounts of their experience" (2001, p. 110). This point was picked up in the conversation with Michael and Judie Bopp (2006) who noted my apparent nervousness in carrying out the formalities of the conversation – explaining the process, setting up the voice recorder, requesting the forms be signed and so on.

The conversations were then transcribed by me by hand, except two which were initially transcribed by third parties and then completed by me. Completed transcripts were sent to the co-creators for approval where they were given the opportunity to add, delete, or clarify aspects of the conversation. Four of the co-creators (three conversations) chose to do this, with two (one conversation) suggesting that further clarification would need to be provided if portions of their transcript were to be used in the final document.

Themes

The themes of the conversations varied depending on the areas of experience, wisdom, insight and praxis of the co-creators and the direction that the conversation naturally went. Clandinin and Connelly note that:

> [Such inquiry] has the compelling, sometimes confounding, quality of merging overall life experiences with specific research experience, realms of experience often separated in [other] inquiry….[In holistic] inquiry boundaries expand and contract and wherever they are at any point in time they are permeable, not osmotically permeable with things tending to move only one way but interactively permeable. Interviewers' personal, private and professional lives flow across the boundaries into the [investigation] site; likewise, though often not with the same intensity, participants' lives flow the other way. (2001, p. 115)

In general, conversation themes initially revolved around topics and statements such as:

- The statement that 'education is inherently transformative, it is the context within which it is situated that determines whether the transformation is positive or not'.
- The concept that 'transformation can potentially occur in any learning experience or set of learning experiences and within or outside formalised learning structures'.
- Whether there has been any meaningful penetration of the dominant education system by formal transformative learning or holistic education (which are sometimes described as critical pedagogies).
- Whether formal transformative learning or holistic education have affected any meaningful change on a broad scale and whether they need to.

- The ability of marginalised people to engage, in a meaningful way, with the dominant worldview.
- Whether social transformation is possible without individual transformation and vice versa.
- Networking and the development of a coherent field around holistic, transformative epistemologies.
- Does repeatedly migrating ontologies, traditions and cultural forms from their original context to different contexts eventually mean they lose their essence?
- The relevance and power of myth, story and legend to transmit ontologies, cultural forms, traditions and practices.
- The role of language in culture, cultural survival, ontology, epistemology, contexts and the transfer of knowledge.
- The role of context-specific epistemologies in the survival of Indigenous cultures and Eastern ontologies.
- Community, development, sustainability and alternative worldviews.
- The concept that there is such a phenomenon as perennial philosophy or (timeless wisdom) and that this phenomenon can be observed in the socio-cultural practices or cultural forms of Indigenous peoples and in the core of many ancient philosophies, and spiritual and wisdom traditions.
- My emergent concept of Ubiquitous Sapience, that is, omnipresent wisdom and insight which informs harmonious praxis.
- The concept that one can group diverse cultures or ontologies around certain observable common themes without inferring that those cultures or ontologies are identical.
- Evidence of the following common themes both within and between Holism (and holistic epistemologies), Indigenous cultures and Eastern ontologies:
    - cosmology and spirituality,
    - nature,
    - contemplative practice,
    - myth, story and legend,
    - aesthetics,
    - learning,

- leadership and community,

- physical activity.

• The concept that once cultural forms, traditions, or ontologies move from being an individual, communal and local practice to being institutionalised, ritualised and formalised they tend to lose their essence.

Approach to interpreting the conversations

As I noted in Chapters one and six, determining which of the formal research methodologies or approaches, if any, I would apply to this investigation was challenging. The basic structure for the investigation and this subsequent document had emerged from the process of undertaking my Masters degree in 2002. From that structure it was clear that this investigation would take some form of a qualitative study. Qualitative study "focuses on meaning in context" (Merriam, 1998, p. 1) and "…the researcher is an instrument of data collection who gathers words or pictures, analyses them inductively, focuses on the meaning of participants and describes a process that is expressive and persuasive in language" (Creswell, 1998, p. 14). It also "involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials—case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, conversation, observational, historical, interactional and visual texts—that describe the routine and problematic moments and meaning in individual's lives" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 2). However, having said that, I had difficulty determining which of the five main traditions in qualitative inquiry (Creswell, 1998) I would utilise, if any. Was I using biography, ethnography, case study, grounded theory, or phenomenology? As the investigation progressed I also considered was I using *Narrative Inquiry* (Chase, 2005; Clandinin & Connelly, 2001), *Co-operative Inquiry* (Heron, 1996), *Appreciative Inquiry* (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005), *Participatory Inquiry* (Skolimowski, 1994), *Creative Inquiry* (Montuori, 2008), *Fluid Inquiry* (Schwab, 1960; Westbury & Wilkof, 1978) or *Comparative Inquiry* (Phillips & Schweisfurth, 2007), none of these, all of these or some combination thereof? This decision was important because it not only affected how the conversation process was undertaken, and what wisdom, insight and reflections on practice were sought and retained, but also how such wisdom, insight and reflections were interpreted. The difficulty inherent in making such a decision stayed with me during the initial phases of the investigation process.

Initially I believed I would take the fairly radical step of utilising *Systems Thinking* as my tool for guiding the design of my investigation, gathering and interpreting the wisdom, insight and reflections, framing my conclusions, and forming this document. Systems thinking allows a comprehensive understanding of the complexities of humanity's existence (Clark Jr, 1997) simply because systems theorists understand that "no single, discrete entity can be fully understood apart from the complex whole of which it is an integral part" (Clark Jr, 1997, p. 24). As it transpired, this did not occur as my immersion into the areas of my investigation became deeper and more *Participatory* (Skolimowski, 1994). I only utilised systems thinking as a tool to initially conceptualise the investigation in the most basic sense. I did however, use the related concept of the *Holarchical* (Koestler, 1967) or *Holographic* (Bohm, 1980; Talbot, 1991; Wilber, 1982b) *Universe* to understand the relationships within and between:

- the ontological, epistemological, axiological, rhetorical and methodological underpinnings of the meta-narratives being explored, *and*
- the collaborative conversations I engaged in, *and*
- my own narrative and experiences, *and*
- the ontological, epistemological, axiological, rhetorical and methodological transformation I experienced as an ongoing shift in consciousness through embarking on a personal search for meaning, *and*
- experiencing the wholeness/oneness which is inherent in the holarchical and holographic universe.

The type of interpretation I utilised during this process was critical to the sort of investigation I believed I was undertaking. After Creswell (noted earlier (1998, p. 14)) and (Peräkylä, 2005) I utilised the manual, intuitive, informal, reflective and iterative approach of grouping together responses to similar conversation topics, statements or questions based on my understanding of what had been said to identify common themes. I found transcribing the conversations, and listening and re-listening to them helped embed the conversation in my understanding "by reading and rereading their texts [holistic inquirers] try to pin down their key themes and thereby, to draw a picture of the presuppositions and meanings that constitute the cultural world of which the textual material is a specimen" (Peräkylä, 2005, p. 870). Ultimately, given my acceptance that there is no such thing as an objective reality (Skolimowski, 1994), my aim was to add depth and richness to the understandings, assumptions and working theories I had already developed during my

extensive immersion in and reflection on, the texts over a number of years, rather than proving or disproving some existent theory.

This manual, intuitive, informal, reflective and iterative grouping did not occur on paper or even in a database, instead it was embodied occurring within myself. This grouping was a synthesis of my experiences with the wisdom, insight and praxis which emerged through the collaborative conversation process, my experience of immersion in and reflection on the texts and the social, cultural, vocational, educational and spiritual experiences of my life. Through the synthesis of experience the understandings, assumptions and working theories I had developed became knowledge. This knowledge gradually became part of me, embodied, clarified and continually cross-referenced through deep reflection, subsequent conversations and epiphanal insight forming an emergent epistemological holon.

This approach to interpreting the texts in conjunction with the wisdom, insight and reflection on practice gained from the conversations is acceptable for a qualitative study for two reasons. First, because talk is action and action is the act of *Doing*. Conversation, though co-created in each instance, is also a form of this action, of *Doing* and *Doing* can be observed in all its elements (Peräkylä, 2005). "Conversations are marked by equality among participants and by flexibility to allow participants to establish forms and topics appropriate to their…inquiry…in-depth probing…is done in a situation of mutual trust, listening and caring for the experience described by the other" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2001, p. 109). Second, because the process is the 'product' (conversation with Jeanetta, 2006). In qualitative inquiry generally and action, co-operative, participatory or holistic investigation specifically, the process is the product because "when things are engaged in process there is constant transformation" (conversation with Crowell, 2007) and new epistemological, ontological, axiological, rhetorical and methodological holons are created simply from the action of being engaged in the process.

Summary

The semi-structured and collaborative nature of the conversations meant that a wealth of wisdom, insight and reflection on practice was experienced, although not all the areas that I expected to touch on with the co-creators in each conversation were covered, as the conversation process was fluid (Clandinin & Connelly, 2001). In some cases this was due

to time constraints (either self- or co-creator-imposed) or because the conversations went in divergent, but relevant, directions from those anticipated. Again this is not unusual in this type of inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2001). In other cases this was because I used a kind of reflective and pondering technique of exploring certain points which did not always end up in a coherent question. In the conversations I tended to provide background and make statements or ask questions which I thought would stimulate conversation. In some cases it did while in others it did not. In some cases I felt I talked too much, either at the time or when I listened back to the recording later. However, since these interactions were conversations rather than interviews I felt that generally there was a feeling of co-creating a shared understanding of the areas being discussed that would have been impossible in a more structured, interview-type environment. In some cases I felt an epiphanal breakthrough in my understanding, not always related to what had been said, but more usually via a kind of insight or the formation of an epistemological holon which holarchically encompassed my previous experiences, awarenesses, knowledge, understandings, assumptions and working theories whilst providing added depth and richness.

Chapter eight – New and clarified understandings, assumptions and working theories

Overview

As I noted in Chapter seven, the aim of the collaborative conversations was to highlight and explore the understandings, assumptions and working theories I developed through Phases one and two of my investigation, and to co-create a deeper understanding of them. Some of the understandings, assumptions and working theories that were explored had remained with me since the conception of the investigation while others had emerged from the process of immersion in and reflection on, the texts.

Discussion

To aid in the presentation of some of the deeper understandings which emerged during the collaborative conversation process I have grouped the forthcoming discussion under a number of general headings.

Approach to the investigation

An underpinning assumption that I had prior to the commencement of this investigation was that I could discuss diverse cultures and societies together and describe them as Indigenous, and equally that I could group diverse spiritual traditions and ontologies together and describe them as Eastern, to form what I describe, as meta-narratives. I was encouraged in this approach by the works of a number of authors who had attempted similar synergies within their particular areas of interest (see Cajete, 1994; Forbes, 2003; Nakagawa, 2000). Although I also had to bear in mind the advice of Dr. Anne Goodman who noted that, although she and her colleagues see themselves as being "integrators of all sorts of things", they usually start from a critical perspective, but to avoid the narrow focus of many so-called critical pedagogies they also approach their work from social and visionary perspectives (collaborative conversation, 2006). This conversation caused me to question, refine and clarify the aim of my work to a significant degree ensuring that I took an approach which would not end up being reductionistic and anachronistic within the context which the document was written. A follow-up assumption was that I would then be able to discern synergies or common themes, that is, "a clear group of elements-beliefs,

feelings, principles and general ideas which seem basic and central to a range of seemingly diverse systems" (Forbes, 2003, p. 2) within and between those meta-narratives and the meta-narrative of Holism.

This underpinning assumption was discussed at length in the collaborative conversations with Dr. Yoshiharu Nakagawa and Dr. Gregory Cajete. Nakagawa-san suggested it was an adequate starting point because he felt each tradition, culture or ontology is a system, and systemic ideas can be explored together (collaborative conversation, 2006). This was my feeling too when I undertook a similar approach to research for my Master's degree. However, he also felt that Western systems thinking is totally different from the systems thinking that is inherent in Eastern thought. This was because "Eastern ideas and Eastern approaches are concerned with the consciousness and the transformation of consciousness. So…consciousness is not separate from existence it is…in a sense…the same thing" (collaborative conversation, 2006). Undoubtedly, this is because systems thinking in the West has essentially evolved from a scientific background where knowing through feeling and the experience of the Self is not so important, whereas, in the Eastern meta-narratives having what might be described as a peak experience, a moment of clarity (or connection, revelation, or awakening), or what I described earlier as an *Instance of Wholeness*, could actually be the vehicle for transformation. He also noted that "the Eastern approach…[uses a] contemplative or meditative approach to transform consciousness…and the Indigenous people also have some [similar] kind of practices" (collaborative conversation, 2006). Whilst Dr. Cajete said:

> I think to a certain extent it is a valid practice. I use this principle called unity and diversity. It's a principle that operates when you take a real close look at relationships within biological communities, plant communities, animal communities…and you can see that there is a diversity of plant life and animal life each is unique and had evolved in certain kinds of ways in response to that environment but underlying it all or on top of it all there are some unifying principles that each of those diverse entities respond to, react to. (collaborative conversation, 2006)

The term unity and diversity succinctly captures the principle that I was alluding to with the concept of common themes within and between each meta-narrative discussed in Section two of this document. He went on to say:

> I think you can build an argument from or around [unity in diversity] for saying there is a connection, there is a parallel, between some of the kinds of understanding that have evolved from perennial philosophy…and some of the traditional practices, understandings and orientations of Indigenous teaching and learning. (collaborative conversation, 2006)

This is essentially the argument that underpins all the work in Section two, although it does bring up the issues around *Perennial Philosophy* which I discussed in Chapter six and also explored in other collaborative conversations.

Perennial philosophy

As I noted in Chapters one and six, I felt it was necessary to explore the concept of perennial philosophy since it could be seen as reflecting the aims of this investigation. However, the concept of perennial philosophy as being *the only* universal, inclusive spiritual truth has implications for diversity and balance and for the individual's unique experience of their spiritual tradition (Ferrer, 2002; Heron, 1996, 1998; Hollick, 2007). From my investigation it appears that this understanding of perennial philosophy is elitist. This perceived elitism was identified and discussed in a number of conversations (conversations with Cajete, 2006; London, 2007; Yoshida, 2006). Dr. Cajete said:

> I do see the same kind of elitism in the writings I have read regarding perennial philosophy and I try and look beyond that and try to find what are again the core writings, essential principles that I might be able to utilise as a way to gain insight into Indigenous philosophies, Indigenous understandings. So for me I use perennial philosophy as a way to guide my thinking in terms of a parallel way of looking at the same ubiquitous situation. (collaborative conversation, 2006)

In this extract he is again underlining the concept that it is possible to look beyond the culturally-specific aspects in a spiritual practice or ontology and experience a similar essence at the core of any number of traditions and indeed societies. However, whilst I believe that there is wisdom, insight, something that perhaps cannot be named, in the universal oneness whatever each tradition or ontology defines that to be (what has also been called a "source of meaning" (conversation with London, 2007) or the "ultimate mystery" (conversation with Crowell, 2007)). My investigation suggests that rather than only being accessible to a few specially trained people, through special ritual with special vestments and paraphernalia as indicated in the perennial philosophy of Huxley and others, it is everywhere, constant and pervasive. Because of this I articulated the concept of *Ubiquitous Sapience*.

Ubiquitous Sapience

My understanding of *Ubiquitous Sapience* is that the wisdom, insight and praxis which is inherent in the universe is everywhere and anyone can access it at any time given the right

sort of attitude, practice and lifestyle. This is a term and concept which appealed to Dr. London (conversation with 2007) and to Dr. Crowell, who said:

> I do agree that…there is, the way to access relationship with this ultimate mystery if you want to call it that or ubiquitous sapience which is kind of nice, or consciousness itself, I do think that there is a movement of mind that is distinct among these various traditions but the movement of mind itself is an opening, a reality that can be experienced for oneself and what people make of that experience and how they cultivate those experiences, to me that is perennial but it is not a perennial knowledge and it may point to something that is beyond or transcendent or immanent even though I do not even like those kind of descriptions. (collaborative conversation, 2007)

However, Dr. Atsuhiko Yoshida noted:

> I'm not sure such a wisdom exists in me or I'm feeling not inside me; I can touch the wisdom in the depths of myself but it is not inside me I can touch in the depths of myself. I'm not, I do not want to say just transpersonal it is very delicate not outside but not inside so….(collaborative conversation, 2006)

This statement captures the difficulty of describing such a concept as perennial philosophy, perennial wisdom, timeless wisdom or *Ubiquitous Sapience* and the relationship that humanity has to it. Dr. Tobin Hart describes this difficulty as being based in a kind of empiricism, that is:

> …being existentially present…[where] we construct all kinds of maps and beliefs, perennial philosophy is one, God is another, those kinds of things. Those are our humble human constructions to make ourselves feel safer or to try to genuinely map this out so we can see. (collaborative conversation 2006)

Dr. Crowell discussed this empiricism as actualising something which perhaps should not be actualised and then building spiritual traditions or approaches from that actualisation. He said:

> [It essentially]…assumes the initial beginnings and the mystical expressions and experiences of that consciousness, it assumes that it is an 'IT'…It absolutises…First of all it assumes that it knows what the essence is, without ever experiencing [for example] Taoism…Tao is not the same as God and it's not the same as the divine Buddha, it just isn't, even though it would refuse conceptualisation, it's not the same, it's not the same in terms of those who experience it that way, the experience is not objectified in the same way (collaborative conversation, 2007).

As noted earlier, this does not mean that he does not believe there is an identifiable relationship that an individual can have with universal oneness, but rather that simply naming this relationship or experience is the empiricism, or absolutising discussed above (conversations with Crowell, 2007; Hart, 2006; London, 2007). That is, it:

> …create[s] a view about it that can not be the truth, until you open up to the view that you have created to allow another view to be created…collectively we create another grand narrative…that's just an objectification of something that was probably very real in terms of experience. I think the best we can do is follow and explore our own experience. (conversation with Crowell, 2007)

It is an experience that is simply rooted in an authentic relationship with universal oneness and is a relationship which undoubtedly requires a shift in consciousness in order to facilitate it.

Migration of spiritual traditions and ontologies

A question that emerged for me as I was undertaking this investigation related to retaining the essence of the spiritual traditions or ontologies as they migrate from their context of origin to other cultural contexts. One could take Buddhism as an example. Buddhism has its roots in India and over time it migrated to China. The Buddhism that is practised in China is not now, and probably never was, the same as was practised in India. Later Buddhism migrated to Japan and thence onto various other places, again Japanese Buddhism is not the same as Chinese Buddhism, Korean Buddhism, Indian Buddhism or for that matter any Buddhism rooted in a different cultural context. Each version of Buddhism is rooted in the culture and context of that country and time. More recently, Buddhism and other Eastern ontologies have taken hold in the United States and Europe. The key question related to these migrations was how long would it be before Buddhism or Taoism, or whichever tradition or ontology is being considered, would lose the essence of what it is. Conversely can a spiritual tradition or ontology retain its essence if it becomes rooted in another culture?

Nakagawa-san believes that in the West "they might not have the same understanding of the Buddhist ideas and the same quality of Buddhist practice and experience, but the transformation…[as the tradition migrates from one country to another] is important for Buddhism" (collaborative conversation 2006), inferring that transformation of the practice, tradition, and experience is simply a development or an evolution which contributes to the longevity of Buddhist practice as well as its transportability. Dr. Isabella Colalillo-Kates noted that:

> …because [its] essence is rooted in…the various understanding of values, the various understandings of traditional connections between and among people [traditions and ontologies have to] change by definition [during migration] because the essence of it is not

rooted an abstract reality it is rooted in the essence of those people. (collaborative conversation, 2006a)

However, as was also alluded to by Nakagawa-san:

> …everything gets distilled even the essence of something gets distilled according to the need, it's not to say it's irreverent it's not a dishonouring of the thing it's just an adaptation process that allows us to keep the perfection of the essence inside us and work with it...Even if [the] rituals are different, even if [the] way of speaking about what [is happening] is different, the thing that connects [practitioners] to the [practitioners elsewhere] is not different although I do not do anything like the [other practitioners do]. There has to be an adaptation…but I think if you use the word adaptation for what purpose to what end you will see that if it does not happen consciously it happens unconsciously simply because life is different. (conversation with Colalillo Kates, 2006a)

Dr. Crowell noted this question is reflective of:

> Foucault's notion that any major discursive set of ideas are contained in the epic that they exist, so we can not really think outside of that epical container about whatever it is so…we're confined by the understandings of our time, by the narrative that is being created now. (collaborative conversation, 2007)

He also noted that in each new context, each tradition or ontology gains a unique "emergent narrative [and that a] combination of those individual narratives creates other emergent forms but they are not [so-called] grand narratives" (collaborative conversation, 2007).

It appears from the conversations where this was raised that a person can experience, and perhaps even have a relationship with universal oneness, but once they label that experience or relationship. Once they explain and talk about it then they are giving it a set of attributes and they are actualising it, they are absolutising it. They are engaging in the empiricism which they created in their head (conversation with Hart, 2006). This empiricism ensures that they are removed from the immediacy of that experience or relationship. Dr. Crowell notes that when this happens "collectively we [tend to] create another grand narrative that's just an objectification of something that was probably very real in terms of experience" (collaborative conversation, 2007). He believes the best thing a person can do is simply to follow and explore their own experiences but not name them. This does not discount the possibility that there are:

> …a set of concerns, a pattern of concerns that…are timeless…they just do not go a away they just change the context, how we relate to one another questions of life and death, these are just timeless questions, some desire to merge with something beyond ourselves and it does point, it points to that which we almost feel a part of we know, there is a

knowing there if the questions are entertained authentically enough you just can not say what it is known. (conversation with Crowell, 2007)

Dr. Cajete describes this set or pattern of concerns as a relational ecology (collaborative conversation, 2006). It is this pattern of concerns that provide the underpinnings for the concepts such as perennial philosophy, perennial wisdom, timeless wisdom and *Ubiquitous Sapience*. However, experiencing those "almost hidden ontologies, almost hidden truths that can not be ever named or computised or imagined" (conversation with Crowell, 2007), requires a significant shift in consciousness for most people existing in the context of the modern or Western worldview.

Shifts in consciousness

Such a shift in consciousness remains a unique and individual experience. However, as these experiences become sought after in a structured way there is a tendency for them to become formalised and institutionalised rather than simply being individuals searching for an authentic experience of a relationship with universal oneness, whatever each tradition or ontology judges this to be. Ironically, this formalisation and institutionalisation then tends to separate the individual *from* the experience. Dr. Ed O'Sullivan calls this "accommodating to an institution" (collaborative conversation, 2006) which reduces the likelihood that the required shift in consciousness will occur. Yoshida-san believes that "it is necessary to learn a kind of form, we do not need institution but we need a kind of form…culture develop[s] such a form and society develop[s] such a[n] institution" (collaborative conversation, 2006). So it appears that cultural forms which have been described as "public expression" (conversation with O'Sullivan, 2006), assist individuals and communities in developing authentic relationships with universal oneness but simply institutionalising practice does not (conversations with Crowell, 2007; Hart, 2006; Nakagawa, 2006; O'Sullivan, 2006; Yoshida, 2006). I discussed a number of these cultural forms in Section two of this work, identifying them as orientations or common themes within and between, the meta-narratives being explored.

Orientations

One such combination of orientations was the relationship between the individual, the community, nature and the universe. Yoshida-san explained that, in Japan, the word *Shizen* means both nature and "spontaneous – maybe – working by itself, there is no purpose

outside the process, so there is no purpose" (collaborative conversation, 2006). I understand shizen to mean simply *Being*. It indicates the never ending cycle of life and death, no beginning, no end just the continual flow of life in all its dimensions (which Yoshida-san described as *Inochi*) and of the universe. This Japanese or more appropriately Shintonian, understanding of nature is essentially holarchical, where there is no sense of increased importance or power and where "nature or any forms of life [are considered to be] very…spiritual being[s]" (conversation with Yoshida, 2006). Nakagawa-san suggested that this use of the term inochi has a partialistic understanding of 'everything' since it did not include the Japanese concept of nothingness or emptiness (collaborative conversation, 2006). However, experiencing inochi (using either Yoshida-san's or Nakagawa-san's enhanced interpretation) and shizen requires a shift in consciousness to such an extent that an ontological and epistemological transformation occurs.

Another Japanese concept that emerged during the conversations phase of this work was that of *En*, which is the concept:

> …that two people, or a person, or a group of persons can have a shared common destiny; you can also have en with a culture or a country, again some kind of sense of destiny with that and there is a lot of mystery. (conversation with Miller, 2006b)

En suggests both the inherent holarchical and holographic nature of our existence but also acknowledges the connection of all entities, relationships, experiences and phenomena to both the mystery of the universe and universal oneness itself.

Discussion of shifts in consciousness and transformation inevitably led to discussion of meditation and contemplative practice (another orientation discussed in Section two). Through the process of undertaking this investigation I came to understand that people could connect to universal oneness through a number of orientations or common themes. Nature was one and contemplative practice was another. However, contemplative or meditative practice can take any number of forms and simply acts as a way to still the mind, remove duality and prepare the Self to be open to connection with the holarchy of the universe and the vital energy therein. In this way anybody can access that universal oneness and that energy rather than it simply being within the purview of groups of elite. I noted in Section two that there can be an emphasis on elitism in some sectors of the contemplative community. Yoshida-san conceptualised contemplation as an integrating of the consciousness with universal oneness (collaborative conversation, 2006).

Dr. Jack Miller described good meditative practice thus:

> …first of all you begin to see the connection with body and mind and then you begin to see the connection with conditions outside the body and mind that affect behaviour and all that kind of thing and then you begin to see that what you want out of life is very similar to what other people want out of life and these kind of natural insights can happen to meditation, of course they can happen outside of meditation too the only thing that I would say is that they do not happen just up here [head] they happen somewhere deeper inside us so that they becomes at the soul level or not just at the head level or the heart level. (collaborative conversation, 2006b)

Social action, change and transformation

Discussion of contemplative practice occurred in a number of conversations including conversations regarding social action and social changes. Clearly, in order to affect change across the dominant system, there needs to be social transformation and this is what most social movements are formed to address (conversation with Goodman, 2006). Unfortunately many people and movements will look at a given situation from a very narrow focus or from a position of "massive denial" (conversation with O'Sullivan, 2006). This denial is reinforced by the structures of modern society. It then interferes with them "tak[ing] the problem they are facing and embrac[ing] it in a way that is constructive [and moving] towards a solution" (conversation with O'Sullivan, 2006). This creates a dichotomy between the individual and the group, and between the group and their original purpose, whereby the individual or group becomes marginalised within their own liberative movement (conversation with Goodman, 2006). From the conversations where this was discussed, it appears that social transformation cannot occur without individual transformation otherwise it is simply temporary change, a shift in power or a temporary refocusing of the structures or even just of the issues (conversation with Goodman, 2006). It also appears that simply achieving a critical mass of individual transformations does not necessarily ensure social transformation, since transformation is a unique and individual experience and the whole is greater than the sum of its parts so social transformation requires more than this. What is missing in much individual transformation is engagement in, and awareness of, the wider contexts which the individual exists within and the issues which impact on them, which reflects the Freirian concept of conscientização (conversations with Anderson, 2006; Jeanetta, 2006). Reflecting this Yoshida-san said:

> …the sharing the same spiritual practices is very important to develop the community and also it is very important to do, to serve, to care about the people, very completely. Without

such service the community…is a network it's just for the praying circle, the hobby circle. (collaborative conversation, 2006)

The practice known as *Engaged Buddhism* is one example of integrating spiritual practices and social action which is taking hold, particularly in the United States (conversation with Nakagawa, 2006). Just as with any social action there is the risk with engaged Buddhism that it simply becomes an 'ego trip' for the practitioner. Dr. Miller, referring to contemplation and action, identified Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King as exemplifying the insight that comes from a harmonious blend of contemplation and action within a broad context that comes from the soul rather than simply from the head (collaborative conversation, 2006b). He noted that a very few people actually manifest the "feeling of a deep interconnection with other human beings, [that] gives a natural rise of warmth and caring" believing that "in terms of the community…that's maybe the most important thing" (collaborative conversation, 2006b). However, I have always been interested in those people who attain enlightenment, become awakened, commune with the Kami or have a relationship with God (or whatever is appropriate in their tradition) through their everyday practices or by just going about their business in an engaged, mindful and balanced way. In some Indigenous cultures and Eastern ontologies there are cultural forms, structures, traditions, rituals, ceremonies and practices which were all shaped over millennia to provide direct contact with the source of their tradition through deep engagement and mindfulness, and balanced action and non-action. Yoshida-san made a comparison in modern Japan with hunters in Kumano forest. He said:

> …you had been in Kumano city besides the sea but behind the sea is very deep forest, near there it most rainy place in Japan so there is very deep forest over there and the hunters, the culture of the hunters is very strong and I guess that the hunters are contemplating when walking in the forest like a meditative, like a Buddhist, like a monk, so you can listen to every side of the forest and the intuition of [the ancients]. (collaborative conversation, 2006)

Communities, networks and meaningful change

Discussion of engagement and social action led me to consider the communities and networks of which I am part, including those associated with holistic education and transformative learning which are variously described as alternative or critical pedagogies and have been written about and practised for some decades now. As I progressed through this work I began to wonder whether they had managed to affect any meaningful change on the system they are critical of, or indeed whether there had been any penetration into

the dominant system at all. A number of people suggested that was a question which is not commonly addressed and not easy to answer (conversations with Dirkx, 2006; Yoshida, 2006). Dr. John Dirkx said that he felt there is:

> …an evolution of consciousness going on broadly in society and that evolution of consciousness is almost by definition stimulating a kind of backlash to what that new consciousness represents and that backlash is embodied in commitment to 'back to basics' [and] fundamentalism, that is driven by fear. So this notion of fear is an attempt to appeal to people's baser instincts and this sort of dark side of humanity and there is another part of the population that is aware that all of that is going and is calling it into question. (collaborative conversation, 2006)

Dr. Dirkx was inferring that whilst there may be an evolution or shift in consciousness underway and there is awareness that there is more to humanity's existence than has, as yet, been explored and there are other forces at play which are seeking to maintain the status quo. It is this interplay that makes it appear that there is little change resulting from the work of the critical and alternative educators within and outside the system. However, my point was that, if this is indeed the case, then they have yet to be able to affect transformation (meaningful and a permanent change) in the dominant system, even if there is a:

> …growing transpersonal and transcendent awareness within the population and that is manifest…in increased awareness of ethical issues and the ways in which ethics and morality emanate not just from a set of rules but from a deep abiding commitment of the Self and to an awareness of the potential and the dark side of oneself, the evil that one has within oneself as well as the evil within society. (conversation with Dirkx, 2006)

If this is the case, then there is a tension between those who experience a shift in consciousness and those who support the status quo. What then can the holistic and transformative learning communities do to affect this tension in a positive way, and should they do anything? Dr. Miller said:

> …you just keep doing the work and in a sense without hardly any expectations. Obviously you do it because you think you are doing something that is beneficial to other people and the community at large but what is the alternative? Stop doing the work and say 'let's be like everybody else and get as much out of this as we can and rip everybody off". Once you begin to see this kind of way of being and doing you can not be that way, it's impossible, so that is why it is so much to do with the changes of consciousness. Once you begin to see things in that way, you can not really. Otherwise you would have to be a huge denial of what you understood because you also begin to see yourself in the cosmic way. (collaborative conversation, 2006b)

He also referred to Martin Luther who apparently said that if the world was to end tomorrow he would still plant the apple tree, Dr. Miller believes that:

> You have to go on and do what you believe is in the sense [of] the way of things…and …that underneath all the crap we live in there is a deeper reality and if we are in harmony with that deeper reality, it means that we just do what we have to do [to maintain that harmony]. (collaborative conversation, 2006b)

Dr. O'Sullivan agrees saying it's not acceptable "just to say 'to hell with it, I'm not going to do anything' I think you have to stand up for life" (collaborative conversation, 2006). He went on to say that one of the problems with society is "massive denial and escape" (collaborative conversation, 2006). Learning not to be in denial and to not to try and escape the system is no simple task. According to Dr. Hart, discussing his attempts to affect the direction of the dominant education system:

> …changing education [feels] like trying to move a mountain with a spoon and it is…so huge and it has become such an institution, in and of itself and it's of an age where the purpose of the institution has been lost and it instead simply becomes self-reinforcing. (collaborative conversation, 2006)

The formalised, institutionalised education industry is very influential in reinforcing the structures of society. He believes the biggest obstacles to penetration into the dominant system (what I would call sustainable change or real transformation) are inertia, the role that societal structures have in sustaining and reacting to local politics, and complete loss of vision (conversation with Hart, 2006). On the other hand, these obstacles could potentially be just a question of perception. Dr. O'Sullivan said:

> [the transformation] we are talking about frequently involves long term efforts so when we are talking of perspective transformation we are talking about a time trajectory that usually takes time for the change to take place…I think the whole notion of critical pedagogy and critical education opens up a whole thing of certain types of activities or practices that have to be present in order for transformation to take place…when some of the practices are resistance practices (practices that decolonise, attempts to re-educate, attempts to problem pose)…when conventional perspectives are challenged they usually come back and try and hold the horizon in place, so that's the conservative aspects of transformative education is that the transformation is sort of, I do not know if you use the term hindered, but certainly held in place and held in a way that prevents large changes from taking place. (collaborative conversation, 2006)

Dr. O'Sullivan is suggesting that transforming societal structures is a complex and time consuming task and that it could be occurring incrementally in ways which are not obvious from the outside. Dr. London similarly conceptualised the work of individuals working in the areas of holistic and transformative learning as being like trickles of water and small

streams. He says that they may not look like much individually but they transform the contexts within which they exist almost imperceptibly and together they form a great ocean with limitless power (collaborative conversation 2007).

Temporal perception and myopia

The potential inertia of societal and institutional transformation is of concern to me because of my interest in the emancipatory and transformative aspects of learning and in the needs of marginalised groups including the need to re-vision their future. Despite my interest in and support for, both holistic education and transformative learning in a general sense, during this journey I have had a feeling that they could affect change on a wider scale than they have to date. However, I was encouraged to consider the idea of the "two-hundred year presence" during the conversation phase of this work (conversation with Goodman, 2006). Dr. Goodman quoted Elise Boulding who apparently said we have to imagine in a expanded way. Dr. Goodman explained it thus:

> It's hard to imagine two thousand years ago, but we can imagine a time when our grandparents or the oldest people we know were born, we were not around but we can imagine it and we can imagine a time when our children or children we know are going to die and from those two points is about two hundred years, it's about seven generations. And then you look at our present as a mid point in a two hundred year presence. So things that happened a hundred years ago that made…possible…what we are doing now – what will happen a hundred years hence and all the gradation in between that therefore make a lot of other things that we may not see, possible. (collaborative conversation, 2006)

This two-hundred year presence is in line with the concept of seven generations that appears in both Indigenous cultures and some Eastern ontologies and encourages people to take a longer view of the achievements humanity has made, acknowledging that they are:

> …part of a continuum of people who have worked over the years to build a base that we can work from and the next base can work from and this is a part of process and the issue is not 'are we going to see this in our life time?' or not [but] 'are we creating the conditions to make the next stage easier to happen?' (conversation with Goodman, 2006)

This is not to say that humanity should become complacent and assume someone else will 'do the good work'. Neither is it to say individuals, families, communities and societies should not have hope as long as they understand what it is they are hoping for, why they need that hope, and why they need to "stand up for life" (conversation with O'Sullivan, 2006). Neither is it to ignore the peculiar phenomenon of institutional, structural and organisational violence (conversations with Anderson, 2006; Colalillo Kates, 2006a;

Crowell, 2007; Goodman, 2006; London, 2007). Institutional, structural and organisational violence that is *the* key factor in the marginalisation of individuals, communities and whole cultures, for example, through the structural systems of slavery, colonisation, or apartheid. This violence also occurs or through practices such as forced migration of Indigenous peoples, the residential school system, the forced adoption of religious traditions from outside one's own culture and the linking of provision of education and services to religious or cultural practices. It also occurs through provision of education that privileges one kind of learning or knowledge over another and through the linking of social service benefits to looking for paid work. Of course the fact that there is such a phenomenon as institutional, structural and organisational violence does not necessarily mean that there are large sections of the dominant society that are inherently evil:

> …you do not have to have an actual actor, who does a violent act just by going to do your job you can be perpetuating violence whether it is economic systems or, the way the systems are built can on violent premises or the systems can be perpetuate violence in an ongoing way…so [you] do not have to be a bad person but if you go and you work by those rules you will perpetuate violence. (conversation with Goodman, 2006)

This consideration of the two-hundred year presence and the acknowledgement that any individual, family, community, or society is simply part of a continuum was described to me as:

> …the idea of detachment, not detachment from effort but detachment from outcomes…and saying will we do this even if we may not succeed…[T]o have a sense we do not have to see any great results and that we are a part of something larger than ourselves. (conversation with Goodman, 2006)

Such a sense is inherent in the holistic ontologies and epistemologies – that each entity, relationship, experience and each phenomenon is part of an interconnected and interrelated universe which exists in non-linear time. However, the institutional, structural and organisational violence which is inherent in structures and the hegemony (conversation with O'Sullivan, 2006), of the Western worldview makes the penetration of the alternative ways of being and ways of knowing extremely difficult. This difficulty was also discussed at some length in the conversation phase of this work. The consensus seemed to be that change would come through provision of systems parallel to and outside of the dominant system (conversations with Goodman, 2006; Hart, 2006; O'Sullivan, 2006) and the development of networks and communication strategies between those working towards holistic, balanced and harmonious solutions.

Whole individuals and their experience of the Western worldview

A related concern that I have to this question involves the work of practitioners such as some of those I conversed with who largely teach graduate studies or who run holistic or alternative, schools or programmes. That concern is, if it is assumed that students who attend holistic or alternative schools, or graduate school programmes in holistic education, transformative learning or integral studies, for example, emerge from that experience as whole individuals who recognise the interconnected nature of the universe and their place in it, then it could be considered that those programmes and teachers have been a success and their students will contribute to the shift in consciousness that so many of my colleagues referred to (conversations with Dirkx, 2006; Hart, 2006; London, 2007; O'Sullivan, 2006). However, it is clear that many of society's organisations and structures support and benefit from the dominant society's fragmentist approach that consolidates importance and power in the hands of a few, an approach which privileges certain ways of knowing, certain ways of being and certain types of knowledge over others (conversation with Anderson, 2006). My concern centres around what will happen when those whole children leave school and go to college, university or work and when those graduate students return to their existing or new workplaces within the framework of the organisations and structures of the Western worldview? Will they become a new generation of holistic and spiritual leaders affecting change in their organisation? Or will they be confronted with the more soul-numbing or soul-destroying realities of life in the modern organisation or system, where their experiences of wholeness are slowly fragmented and eroded? Dr. Dirkx believes that individuals would be unlikely to be able to affect change in their organisations because of the inherently oppressive nature of these organisations. However, he did believe that creating community or communities of practice, such as occurs through Parker Palmer's *Courage to Teach* programme (2007), could help nourish the souls of the practitioners, thus giving them the strength to continue their practice as well as providing networking opportunities, access to resources and the support of their peers (collaborative conversation, 2006). Dr. Bob London also referred to the need for practitioners to nourish their inner lives and to the value of individual and collective reflection (in a supportive environment) on practitioner's experience of being in their organisation (collaborative conversation, 2007).

Dr. Crowell spoke of the deeper learning that occurs once one begins the inevitable socialisation process that occurs when a person is immersed in a "community of discourse"

(collaborative conversation, 2007), while Dr. Hart spoke of the need for systemic solutions to systemic problems (collaborative conversation, 2006) rather than the effectively piecemeal solutions of individual educators, classrooms, schools, or organisations all trying their best to "do what we have to do" (conversation with Miller, 2006b) to maintain that harmony. Although Dr. Hart also spoke of the importance of networking, he spoke of it as a basis for the development of a systemic solution which would impact on policy development rather than simply networking for mutual support and strength (conversation with Hart, 2006). From my investigation, it is difficult to see how communities of practice can be formed and sustained on a broad enough scale to provide support and strength to those children or graduate students when there is little evidence of coherent and cooperative networks even within the holistic and transformative learning community now (conversations with Hart, 2006; Yoshida, 2006).

Transformative learning

One assumption which I have held from well before the commencement of this document is that learning is inherently transformative but it is the context within which that learning occurs which determines whether that transformation is positive or not. This assertion caused considerable discussion within the collaborative conversations, not only around what do I mean by learning (conversations with Bopp & Bopp, 2006; Goodman, 2006) but also what do I mean by transformation (conversations with Anderson, 2006; London, 2007; Yoshida, 2006).

Dr. Stephen Jeanetta pointed out that whilst he believed that all learning *could* be transformative in some formal structures learning does not seem to even take place at all. This was the same sentiment that encouraged me to undertake this investigation in the first place. His view was that *if learning is taking place*, then it *can* be transformative (collaborative conversation, 2006), this was also a view supported by Mr. Anderson although he also emphasised the role of the curriculum in its widest sense which he believes includes the context in which the learning experience occurs. He believes that potential for transformation is directly related to who controls the curriculum (collaborative conversation, 2006). Dr. London, though agreeing in essence with my view of transformation being inherent in learning did say that he doesn't think that all *formal* education is positive *or* negative, he believes that at lot of it is neutral (collaborative conversation, 2007).

Dr. O'Sullivan described transformation as "the idea of waking up and seeing what is the situation and also seeing the path to the possibility of changing the situation" (collaborative conversation, 2006), whilst Dr. London described transformation as being "a connection with spirit [and that transformation]…its not possible without…something that we are all connected to and that is involved in the evolution of the universe [and that]…is not something you can explain by atoms randomly colliding" (collaborative conversation, 2007). Dr. O'Sullivan also said:

> …when we talk about transformative education or transformative learning I think, we are talking about a dynamic process, something that is alive and moving I think when we think about learning itself it is an open ended phenomenon so the idea of the learning context and the learning trajectory, going forward in transformation in creative transformation is probably a given, in fact it's almost a tautology to say education and transformation are actually one and the same, because the idea of transformation means that the person is in the process of revitalising standpoints and horizons that they have over time, the learning itself almost implicitly has the notion of change built into it because in fact learning is a change in perspective. (collaborative conversation, 2006)

Whilst Dr. Dirkx said that:

> …the potential for transformation is inherent in the process of learning but I do think that there are some forms of learning which are not transformative and do not necessarily have to be transformative…For me transformation, transformative learning is all about a libratory move, a libratory stance and that's liberation from forces of coercion that are either internal, or external, or both, arising from within oneself or arising from without in the context of society; and so in that respect it's that traditional critical theory approach to thinking about transformative learning but not all learning necessarily has to be that way. (collaborative conversation, 2006)

Dr. Dirkx also noted that learning that was simply functional or vocational in nature also had the potential to be libratory and therefore transformative agreeing that the context within which the learning occurs affects whether the transformation is positive or not. He said the learning environment "…attends to the relationship of the Self to the subject matter and the dynamic nature of that relationship and the formative and transformative potential of that relationship then I think you can have the potential for transformative learning" (collaborative conversation, 2006). However, Mr. Anderson, a vocational education specialist, noted that the curriculum in vocational education and training sector in Australia is determined by:

> …parties…external to the learning experience or process and there is very little input from the teacher or learner so there is an assumption that [the] competency standards…[that] shape the vocational curriculum…[will] achieve change of some sort but I don't think they can ever possibly achieve transformation unless just by chance those competency

standards happen to coincide with what the student wants to learn. (collaborative conversation, 2006)

Dr. Miller noted that the word 'transformation' is used a lot in adult education circles currently and that there is a danger that it is simply used to mean individual transformation with the very narrow focus of *the individual within the scope of the adult education environment* (collaborative conversation, 2006b). This can also lead to a very academic perspective of transformation that infers that it is merely the purview of the select academic elite to experience, write about and discuss (conversation with Jeanetta, 2006). Whereas, what Dr. Miller describes as holistic education, is "about the cosmos and our relationship to the cosmos and everything…flowing out of that" (collaborative conversation, 2006b), providing a much broader context for transformation which he does not believe is necessarily evident in other dialogues related to transformational learning.

A related concern was raised by Dr. Crowell who suggested that for some people engaged in transformational learning, it was "an agenda to change another person [and] about affecting change in the world, through changing other people" (collaborative conversation, 2007), and that inherent in that aim is an imposition of a set of assumptions or way of being that infers a lack of respect for both the individual concerned as well as their cultural and community traditions, traditions which are key to creating the potential for transformation to occur. Miss Cooper emphasising the role of culture noted that "self identity equals self-determination for learners and that culture-based learning is transformative event" (collaborative conversation, 2006), without the development of self-identity the opportunities for transformation are severely curtailed. In response to this concern Dr. Crowell noted that in his own work he has moved from thinking "how could he change people's lives" to "how could he touch people's lives" or how his:

> …interaction with them touch them in ways so that they can decide on their own what they want to do with this? Where do they want to go with this? And how can I then be an agent of support, of guidance, of inspiration, of information, all of those things and I felt my role change and I felt my sensitivities towards students enter into a different realm. (collaborative conversation, 2007)

Although Dr. Crowell does not necessarily have a negative view of transformation, he said "…when things are engaged in process there is constant transformation and… transformative possibilities [are] built into every creative act, every creative event" (collaborative conversation, 2007). He sees the role of the teacher is to:

> …provide the seeds of new possibilities which are emergent within process, within the processes that we go through because those will be constant, which of those transformations are most significant, which are most delusional, which transformations are more self-centred, which transformations are more communitarian…. (collaborative conversation, 2007)

So Dr. Crowell also believes that, within the holarchy that is the learning experience, transformation seems to be a given.

Dr. O'Sullivan and I also discussed the semantic differences around the use of the word 'transformation' that I had encountered during my work. He said:

> …from my perspective when we are talking about transformation we are talking about moving from one learning horizon to another and that means you are actually revamping and reintegrating older systems of learning to some new intellectual, emotional, spiritual horizons and that process is changes the form of the perspective that you are in, it's how do you shift to a different horizon or perspective or worldview. (collaborative conversation, 2006)

Undoubtedly some of these semantic differences arose because of the difficulties of using language to describe concepts which are essentially empiricist in nature (conversations with Cajete, 2006; Colalillo Kates, 2006a; Crowell, 2007; Goodman, 2006; Hart, 2006) such as those that are inherent in my assumption regarding learning being inherently transformative. However, this assumption emerged from my own experiences of leaving school early without qualifications, learning a trade and later being exposed to higher education at a mature age which I feel was a very transformative experience as it changed the way I viewed myself, the way I viewed the world, and the way I interacted with the contexts I subsequently existed within. My assumption was both generally and specifically supported during the conversations in which it was raised (conversations with Anderson, 2006; Cajete, 2006; Crowell, 2007; Dirkx, 2006; Goodman, 2006; Hart, 2006; London, 2007; Nakagawa, 2006; O'Sullivan, 2006), although Dr. Dirkx described this as a "kind of disposition…[that is] the attitude, or the perspective, the frame of reference that the particular individual has" (collaborative conversation, 2006). He had also noticed a similar disposition from his own students, many of whom were adults returning to formal, institutionalised education from industry.

In an interesting side-note, I noticed that a number of the people I conversed with avoided the semantics around describing holistic or transformative learning. Instead they simply discussed 'deeper learning' (conversations with Crowell, 2007; Dirkx, 2006), and for Dr.

Crowell some of this deeper learning is happening in the realm of 'unlearning' (collaborative conversation, 2007).

Transformation within the formalised and institutionalised structures

Over the years that I have been interested in holistic and transformative learning I have encountered many people who view it as unrealistic to expect such transformation within the formalised and institutionalised structures of the education industry. In most cases, the writers, thinkers and practitioners that engaged in collaborative conversation with me conduct university or college level teaching around the subjects of holistic and transformative learning, or at least believe they are teaching in a holistic or transformative way within the mainstream education sector. Their collective response to the comments that I had previously encountered can be summed up by Dr. Dirkx who said "the participation of adults in formal settings of education has the *potential* to evoke transformative processes there is no doubt in my mind about that, I have seen it happen over and over and over again" (collaborative conversation, 2006). Miss Cooper noted though that in her experience, and the experience of other Aboriginal people she has encountered, the transformation they experienced after returning to the academy as adults was more to do with engaging with other Aboriginal intellectuals and sharing experiences than it was to do with the academy itself (collaborative conversation, 2006).

Finally, Dr. Dirkx noted that he had concerns about those who suggest that transformative processes which begin within the academy have a beginning and an end rather than being an ongoing:

> stance [that] one has towards one's life, that is to say…there is an openness, a disposition, there is a way of thinking about the relationship [between the Self and the subject matter], what it is that we are here for in terms of the learning, the educational context and the overall purpose of what we are trying to achieve and…that happens over and over and over again. (collaborative conversation, 2006)

Summary

The aim of the collaborative conversation phase of this work was to explore and deepen the understandings, assumptions and working theories I had drawn from the social, cultural, vocational, educational and spiritual experiences of my life and from the immersion in and reflection on the great number of texts that I have engaged with both for

this and my previous post-graduate study. To that end I engaged in collaborative conversations writers, thinkers and practitioners, many of whose works I had been immersed in during this investigation. The result was over two hundred pages of transcribed conversations, not all of which have been quoted from directly in this final document. However, each conversation was extremely interesting and useful, not only because "all conversations and dialogues between and among people have an intrinsic humanistic value" (personal communication with Colalillo Kates, 2006b) as I was reminded following one of the conversations, but because arguably:

> …the meeting of like-minded people [and] the sharing [of ideas] with others that may never have occurred before [leads to] the drawing together of minds that would [otherwise] have never have found each other [and the creation of new collective wisdom, insight and praxis]. (personal communication with Gyemi, 2007)

Conversation is a holistic activity where many ontological, epistemological, axiological, rhetorical and methodological holons are drawn together within a certain context or holarchy and a new holon is formed. That new holon is the conversation itself. Each conversation does indeed have its own intrinsic value, simply because it exists and cannot be reduced to its component parts without losing its essence, as in the case of any holon. Whilst, together, the collaborative conversations form the rhetorical holarchy of the meta-conversation, as well as the methodological holarchy of the meta-collaboration within the greater epistemological holarchy of the experience of undertaking this investigation itself.

Chapter nine – Archetypes and structures, harmonious ontology and holistic, transformative epistemologies

Overview

The catalyst for this document was the realisation that many of the world's peoples live a fragmented and self-encapsulated (O'Sullivan, 1999) existence. This fragmentation manifests itself in the way individuals interact with each other *within* their families, communities, societies and cultures. It manifests in the way communities interact *between* societies and cultures. It also manifests in the way humanity interacts within its *wider context* in general and the natural environment specifically. This fragmentation is perpetuated all over the world by the *structures* of those societies and cultures including, but not limited to, formal education which seek to continually reinforce and recreate the Western worldview. This worldview encourages self-interest and individualism and is observable in the accumulation of land, natural resources, wealth and power in the hands of a very few, the inevitable result of which is marginalisation. This marginalisation encompasses the marginalisation of individuals, families, communities, societies, whole cultures and of the environment. This situation was explored in detail in Section one and is graphically described in the latest World Wildlife Fund's *Living Planet Report*, which says humanity is:

> …using the planet's resources faster than they can be renewed – the latest data available (for 2003) indicate that humanity's Ecological Footprint, our impact upon the planet, has more than tripled since 1961. Our footprint now exceeds the world's ability to regenerate by about 25 per cent. (2006, p. 1)

With this ongoing marginalisation in mind, the purpose of this document is to investigate a harmonious ontology which could facilitate the conditions for holistic, transformative epistemologies within the structures of a community, with a view to creating a sustainable future for all beings. This chapter describes the archetypes and structures that may synthesise the roles and responsibilities that the meta-narratives explored appear to ascribe to humanity. It also explores the role that holistic, transformative epistemologies could have in relation to those potential archetypes and structures. Finally, it describes how a *Harmonious Ontology*, such as has previously been identified, may have the potential to facilitate a sustainable future for all beings.

Recapitulation

The importance of humanity to the Earth and the place of the Earth in the universe have been points of consternation, conjecture and conviction for millennia (Hawking, 1998, 2002; Hollick, 2007; Kuhn, 1957; Tarnas, 1991, 2006). Whole civilisations have been built around worldviews and cosmologies rooted in one or other particular belief or understanding which later proved to be flawed, or at least inconsistent with the beliefs, understandings and experiences of the civilisations and societies that followed. The acknowledgement and appreciation of humanity's place in the universe inevitably leads to the development of "cultural forms" (conversation with Yoshida, 2006) or "public expressions" (conversation with O'Sullivan, 2006) in order to articulate that place and share it with others. Cultural forms which, by their very nature, actualise, empiricise, absolutise and objectify the unique and context-specific experiences that each individual has (conversations with Crowell, 2007; Hart, 2006). These experiences emerge from the co-sharing and co-creating (Talbot, 1991) of the unfolding, enfolding and evolving universe with the other entities, relationships, experiences and phenomena inherent therein. Such experiences become known to them *empirically* rather than simply intellectually. In some cases the creation of these cultural forms has led to recognisably institutionalised and formalised religious and spiritual traditions, in others they remain individualised and localised with little known about them outside of their specific and unique familial or cultural context. Finally, in other cases such cultural forms seemingly disappeared in mere decades whilst in others they appear to have lasted for millennia.

It is difficult to know why some cultural forms last and others appear not to. What is known is that cultural forms are always context-specific and when the context which they exist within changes, then the longevity of those cultural forms is in question. However, inevitably one of the keys to longevity is pragmatism. Such pragmatism can be observed throughout history including, for example, in the scheduling of Christian celebrations on the dates of existing Pagan festivals, or the development of localised versions of Buddhism in China, Japan and Korea (amongst others) through the incorporation of locally contextualised elements into the Buddhism which had originally migrated from India. Such pragmatism can be said to facilitate both the evolution of the aforementioned context-specific cultural forms and the accommodation of them into their new cultural contexts (conversations with Colalillo Kates, 2006a; Nakagawa, 2006). Where pragmatism

has not been applied, or indeed where it has been applied too well, and the original cultural forms have been completely subsumed into the new context, it can appear that the original forms were not sustainable. However, in such situations, longevity and therefore sustainability, is generally judged against the perceptions of the dominant worldview of the time. This is a subjective practice at best since there is no such thing as an objective experience (or decision) possible for human beings (Heron, 1996, 1998; Skolimowski, 1994; Talbot, 1991).

It now appears that using the Western worldview of the twenty-first century as the measure of longevity and sustainability is fundamentally flawed, since "in comparison to other traditions, [it] has not been around long enough to make [a] real statement…[without] running into the sustainability issues…and the ways in which…modern Western thought has dealt with the environment" (conversation with Cajete, 2006). Dr. Cajete believes that, as prevalent as it may be, the "Western tradition is very young, [and] it has not gone through all the different stages of its own development" yet (collaborative conversation, 2006). Although he notes that for those who exist within and embody this worldview it is clear "that in a civilisation as advanced as the Western civilisation there can be no other way of doing things, that there is no other more successful system and it's just really the way you look at success" (collaborative conversation, 2006). However, it is likely that this has also been a common view held by those who inhabited and embodied the dominant worldview *of any era* throughout history, including worldviews which have long since been subsumed, assimilated or obliterated some of which were substantially significant in the development of the Western worldview, such as the Greek, Roman, Macedonian, Persian and Egyptian amongst others (Tarnas, 1991). Just as it is clear that these worldviews no longer exist in their original form in the West it is also clear that the ideas or essences of these and other worldviews, are still observable in the cultural forms of various religious, spiritual and philosophical traditions (Tarnas, 1991). This revelation indicates that longevity or sustainability are indeed subjective terms, a fact that is very relevant to the participatory (Skolimowski, 1994) and co-operative (Heron, 1996, 1998) mode of inquiry utilised throughout this investigation.

I will now describe the archetypes and structures which have emerged from my ongoing and immersive investigation.

Archetypes and structures

As noted in Chapter one, worldviews generate mythologies and archetypes which reinforce and recreate that worldview generation after generation. These mythologies and archetypes are actually holarchies formed of ontological, epistemological, axiological, rhetorical and methodological holons. These holons not only shape and guide the actions, values, beliefs and attitudes of the individuals, families, communities and societies which exist within the worldview, but they also shape and form the structures of those societies. As was discussed in Section one, the mythologies and archetypes of the Western worldview can now be shown to be based on "obsolete beliefs and flawed conceptions" (Laszlo, 2006b, pp. 62-70), the embodiment of which has led Western society and therefore humanity, to a situation which facilitates *amorality* in all aspects of life as well as the stagnation of global consciousness.

Duane Elgin says "…we actualise who we think we are. The images and archetypes that we hold of ourselves act as a magnet to draw us into the future" (2008, p. 61). For the cultures and societies which inhabit the meta-narratives explored in Section two, the images and archetypes they hold of themselves reinforce the responsibility, indicated by their cosmologies, of maintaining the balance and harmony of the complex holarchies of which they are part. This responsibility is manifested, as was noted earlier, not through what values each person espouses but through the virtues each person *embodies* (Jacobs & Jacobs-Spencer, 2001). My investigation has indicated an archetype which is common to the meta-narratives and which encapsulates the roles which are appropriate to this responsibility. I have come to describe this archetype and the people who embody it, as *Spiritual Warriors*.

The spiritual warrior

Far from being a reflection of the violent, war-mongering history of humanity, the term *Warrior* is used here to reflect the virtues of benevolence, courage, fortitude, generosity, honesty, honour, humility, humour, intuition, justice, learning, loyalty, patience, politeness, reason, reflection, self-control and sincerity. These virtues could perhaps be called universal and have been evident in traditions, cultures and societies for millennia. They have been embodied in such people as North American Indigenous peoples where warriors were peacekeepers and protectors, in Japan where the role of the Samurai warrior

(or knight) and was to serve with wisdom something bigger than themselves and in China where the warrior monks of Shaolin were equally capable as healers and Sages as they were warriors. The spiritual warrior archetype has also been exemplified by specific people throughout history such as King Arthur, King David, Deganawidah, Hiawatha, Florence Nightingale, Gandhi, Mother Therese, Rosa Parks, the Dalai Lama, Martin Luther King and countless others who are less well known (Cleary, 2008; James, 2004; Karoniaktajeh, 1979; Nakae, 2008; Nitobe, 2005; Stevens, 2001; Tehanetorens, 2000; Trungpa, 1984; Wallace, 1994; Ywahoo, 1987).

Elgin describes four "empowering archetypes" which he believes "provide us with the tools for collectively imagining a positive pathway into the future" (2008, p. 61). They are "a maturing species" (growing up and experiencing growing pains indicating the self-destructive patterns humanity is currently experiencing should pass as maturity arrives), "a heroic species" (evolutionary heroes on a journey to a collective awakening during which humanity will face a supreme test of its capacities), "a witnessing species" (waking up and consciously reflecting on humanity's existence to envision a more meaningful future), and "a cosmic species" (learning to live in the universe as humanity discovers that it is intimately integrated into a living unfolding, enfolding and evolving universe (Weber & Bohm, 1982)) (adapted from Elgin, 2008, pp. 61-63). The spiritual warrior archetype is both 'evolutionary' and 'witnessing' according to Elgin's descriptions (2008) since it experiences *Instances of Wholeness* through *Shifts in Consciousness* which provide insights into the holarchical, holographic and non-linear nature of the universe and beyond. However, the spiritual warrior archetype is also a 'cosmic species' according to his descriptions (2008) since the spiritual warrior is inherently *a spiritual being* connected to the *vital energy* with which all entities, relationships, experiences and phenomena are imbued and whose consciousness is in tune with the consciousness of the universe (Bache, 2008; Laszlo, 2006a, 2006c, 2007, 2008b, 2006d; Laszlo & Currivan, 2008; Laszlo et al., 2003; McTaggart, 2008a; Teilhard de Chardin, 2002).

The spiritual warrior archetype does not seek to impose a new worldview, cosmology or system on the rest of the world. Instead the spiritual warrior engages in deep reflection on themselves, their own experiences and their engagement with their immediate and wider contexts. This deep reflection, rather than being a vehicle to withdraw from the world, is a way to discover who they really are by stripping back the masks and false images that

society and dominant worldviews create, to have an authentic understanding of themselves as a whole person. For, if human beings cannot experience an authentic understanding of themselves, they cannot experience an authentic understanding of the contexts or holarchies of which they are part. However, this experience is neither dualistic nor narcissistic. Once an authentic understanding of the whole self has been established, the spiritual warrior expands this authentic understanding out from themselves engaging with the relationships they have with their families, friends, colleagues and the immediate holarchies they exist within. Then, just like a living and practical example of a 'loving-kindness' meditation (see Chödrön, 2001a, 2001b; Miller, 1994 for an explanation of loving-kindness meditation), this authenticity expands out from the individual emanating through the levels of the holarchies they exist within, what my investigation has led me to call 'levels of oneness'. Levels which culminate in what I described earlier as universal oneness—that is, the known universe and beyond, what is also described as the 'cosmic order' and what I will, from hereon in, call the *Kosmos* (Fideler, 2007; Gallegos Nava, 2001; Laszlo & Currivan, 2008; Roof, 2008), after the Greek for 'ordered whole'. The spiritual warrior has an ongoing and dynamic yet deeply authentic relationship with all levels of this holarchy, this oneness, this Kosmos as well as with the wisdom, insight and praxis contained therein—what I described in Chapters six and eight as *Ubiquitous Sapience*. This authentic relationship ensures that the spiritual warrior is engaged and is fully present in every moment, relationship and experience. This engagement or presence encompasses the honouring of the inherent and basic goodness (Trungpa, 1984) which exists everywhere with compassion, *Awe* and wonder and which is, in and of itself, nourishing and enriching of the soul.

Though rooted in the often ancient origins of the cultures, societies, traditions and ontologies, described in Section two as meta-narratives, the spiritual warrior has a key role in the twenty-first century. This is the role of revisioning the structures of the Western worldview in order to facilitate a sustainable future for not only the whole of humanity, but also the Earth itself. This role emerges from the *Shifts in Consciousness* which lead to the realisation that humanity is, as others have suggested (Teilhard de Chardin, 2002), the "living embodiment of the cosmic order" (Fideler, 2007, p. 61) and a perfect example of the holarchical and holographic nature of the Kosmos. A realisation that necessarily means that:

> …instead of being absorbed in the minor self of ego, each individual must recognize his or her connection with all life in the cosmos…so [they] can…[move] along a more compassionate path and bring about mutual happiness for [them]selves and others. (Henderson & Ikeda, 2004, p. 1)

Such a realisation reveals that each person has both the *right and the responsibility* to live a meaningful life and:

> …meaning comes from wholehearted participation in the cosmic process. It ceases to be something we create for ourselves and is found in the purposes of the whole. When we act selfishly, we foster dis-integration; but when we act with love, we promote integration and harmony. The deepest meaning is thus to be found in our capacity to co-create our planet and the cosmos' (Hollick, 2007, p. 365)

Structures

If the spiritual warrior is the primary archetype which emerges from the meta-narratives explored in Section two, then the primary structure inherent therein is *Community*. My investigation has led me to the deeper understanding of community as being, not simply common oneness (Bopp & Bopp, 2001), but rather 'the *gift of common oneness*' (after the Latin for 'gift' which is *muni*, the middle letters of the word community (personal communication with Colalillo Kates, 2004)). As such, community is structurally and spiritually very powerful since it is "the way of being together, with both individual authenticity and interpersonal harmony so that people become able to function with a collective energy even greater than the sum of their individual energies" (Peck, 1987, p. 239); and:

> a strong community helps people develop a sense of true self, for only in community can the self exercise and fulfil its nature: giving and taking, listening and speaking, being and doing. But when community unravels and we lose touch with one another the self atrophies and we lose touch with ourselves as well. Lacking opportunities to be ourselves in a web of relationships, our sense of self disappears, leading to behaviours that further fragment our relationships and spread the epidemic of inner emptiness. (Palmer, 2004, p. 39)

During my investigation I have also discerned that within the structure of community are the empowering formal and informal structures of *cultural forms* (discussed in Section two), *communities of learning*, *communities of practice* and *holistic leadership* (briefly discussed in Chapter two). These structures reflect the understanding that "you cannot have a holistic view without being a whole person" (Henderson & Ikeda, 2004, p. 53) and the understanding that, within the meta-narratives explored, community is experienced as

community in the ultimate sense. This understanding is reflective of the wisdom, insight and praxis inherent in the universal and ultimate oneness of the Kosmos, as well as the roles and responsibilities being part of such universal oneness brings. It is the shaping of these structures by this wisdom, insight and praxis which ensures their sustainability. Such structures do not rely on the notion that any *single* person, group, discipline or profession can provide the answers to the problems a society or culture face since "in the whole lies the answer" (Briskin, 2008, p. 10). However, neither do they necessarily rely on the notion, as Briskin does, that simply "the wisdom is in the group…when the wisdom of the group is activated, a lattice work of understanding grows with each voice, capable of holding meaning, allowing something unexpected and needed to emerge" (2008, p. 10), although they do support the *possibility*. What they *do* rely on is that it is the *collaboration* between the *community* and the *Kosmos* through the embodiment of a harmonious ontology which provides access to the wisdom, insight and praxis inherent in the *vital energy* or *consciousness* of the Kosmos and therefore it is truly that "in the whole lies the answer" (Briskin, 2008, p. 10).

Harmonious Ontology

In the meta-narratives explored, a harmonious ontology pervades all levels of the holarchy through the roles of the eight orientations (described in Section two) and the major structures of community, communities of learning, communities of practice and holistic leadership. The representation of this (Figure 9.2) is a simplification of the complex holarchies and relationships that humanity exists within. However, it can be viewed as a conceptual framework which indicates an epistemological, ontological, axiological, rhetorical and methodological holarchy which provides an increasing order of oneness/wholeness but not an increasing order of importance or power.

Before exploring this representation I will briefly explain the form of representation I have used. This form is what I call the Zen circle. It is an ancient symbol for 'Whole'.

Figure 9.1: The Zen circle – Whole (calligraphy by Ivan Thornton).

Zen art has been described by Sabro Hasegawa as a "controlled accident" (cited in Watts, 1989, p. 174). It is the natural representation of nature, perfection in imperfection and uniqueness in spontaneity. In Zen art the "artistic technique is discipline in spontaneity and spontaneity in discipline" (Watts, 1989, p. 174). The Zen circle can be said to represent *oneness* or *wholeness*. Each time it is drawn it is unique just as each person is unique. Each time it is drawn it has different qualities and imperfections that are sometimes imperceptible except to the artist, just as each person has different qualities and imperfections. The Zen circle is created from a single stroke. Each time it is drawn it is complete, just as each person is complete – a single indivisible whole and a classic example of a holon. As with all Zen art it is in the uniqueness, the difference, the imperfections and the completeness that its perfection lays, it is perfect simply because it is, just as it is with a human being. Each human being is unique, different, perfect and complete, simply because they are. Finally, the Zen circle is always open, allowing the unknown, the mystery, the spontaneous, and wonder and *Awe* to enter it. Just as when a person enters this world they are open to the unknown, the mystery, wonder and *Awe* that unmediated communion with the Kosmos brings.

When represented as the holarchy noted above, the form of the Zen circle looks like this:

Ubiquitous sapience

Universal oneness

Experiencing Awe in everything that surrounds us and connects with us

Common Oneness (Community)

Cosmology/Spirituality

Nature

Aesthetics

Myth/Story/Legend

One (individual)

Undertaking activities that nourish the Soul

Community of practice

Engaged service (Community and Leadership)

Acknowledging and appreciating the interconnectedness of things

Community of learning

Humour	Reflection
Intuition	Courage
Humility	Benevolence
Generosity	Politeness
Fortitude	Sincerity
Self-control	Honesty
Justice	Loyalty
Learning	Patience
Honour	Reason

Learning

Contemplative practice

Omnipresent wisdom and insight

Physical activity

Living in the moment

Figure 9.2: Harmonious ontology, ubiquitous sapience and oneness (calligraphy by Ivan Thornton).

The first level of the holarchy (as seen in the representation above) can be understood to be the individual (One). The individual embodies virtues which might be described as perennial, universal or timeless. These virtues have formed the basis of many diverse ontological holons (complex ways of being) for millennia (as discussed in Chapter six) and yet are always rooted in the cultural and contextual specificities of the holarchies within which the individual exists, as well as in the wisdom, insight and praxis that is accessible through the individual's relationship with the Kosmos and the vital energy or consciousness inherent therein.

The second level of the holarchy can be understood to be community (Common Oneness). The relationship of and engagement between, the individual and the community is mediated through a number of orientations. These orientations which infer the existence of complex and integrated cultural forms and structures were highlighted in Section two through the exploration of seemingly diverse meta-narratives.

The third level of the holarchy can be understood to be the Kosmos (Universal Oneness). The relationship of and engagement between, the community with the Kosmos is mediated through four anchoring strategies. These anchoring strategies are firmly rooted in the embodiment of a cosmology which recognises the holarchical and holographic nature of the Kosmos and the roles and responsibilities of humanity therein. Finally, these anchoring strategies again infer the existence of complex and integrated cultural forms and structures.

Having discussed cultural forms and community at length previously, I will now discuss the structures of *Communities of Learning*, *Communities of Practice* and *Holistic Leadership* in more detail.

Communities of learning (learning communities)

Communities of learning (or learning communities) encompass the "basic characteristics of human connection, human relationality, human affective understandings" (conversation with Cajete, 2006) and provide a context where people who need and want to learn can do so together, providing a richer and deeper understanding than is possible simply as an individual. This richer and deeper understanding occurs within an environment with a high "quality of interaction, respect, caring and authenticity" (Caine, Caine, & Crowell, 1999, p. 86), what might also be described as 'love', an environment which reflects the embodied virtues of the harmonious ontology. This context is extremely important, especially in the twenty-first century where well-meaning aspirational, but decontextualised, national and international policies such as *No Child Left Behind*, *Achieve Universal Primary Education* and *Education For All* shape the educational and therefore social and vocational futures of literally billions of people. As Dr. Goodman noted "education for all, for what?" (collaborative conversation, 2006).

In the meta-narratives explored, learning communities are rooted in both the cultural and contextual specificities of the community's existence, as well as in the roles and responsibilities of humanity in maintaining the balance and harmony of the Kosmos. These

in turn provide an appropriate meta-context for both the community itself and the learning it engages in. The learning community is inherently "supportive and healthy" (Caine et al., 1999, p. 9), where experiences are appropriately complex and the learning they experience is embedded in the cultural and contextual specificities noted previously. Participation in a learning community is not passive, but is active, with the members engaging with and reflecting on, all levels of the holarchy continuously, constantly moving between the individual, the communal and the universal, and back again, as appropriate. However, active participation does not preclude the possibility for what has been called 'compassionate silence', that is, "the kind of silence that surrounds reflection, contemplation and is…another form of human communication. [Such] compassionate silence can help us connect with each other, to touch and be touched by truths that evade all words" (Palmer, 2004, p. 155). Compassion is one of the embodied virtues of the harmonious ontology.

Communities of practice

Communities of learning and communities of practice are "two sides of the same coin" (collaborative conversation with Cajete, 2006). Pór notes that "Communities of practice are social life forms…[which] skilfully combine individual and collective capability" (2008, p. 7). It is communities of practice which allow the learning noted above to be applied in an "important and relevant context [which] then reinforces that learning and…really extends it" (collaborative conversation with Cajete, 2006). This reinforcement and extension give meaning to the acquired knowledge and experience and Wenger notes that "meaning is always the product of negotiation by which I mean that it *exists in this process of negotiation*. Meaning exists…in the *dynamic relation of living in the world*…[and] practice is about meaning *as an experience of everyday life*" [my emphasis] (1998, p. 54).

The meta-narratives explored clearly demonstrate the application of communities of practice since learning, meaning, experience and everyday life form a constantly evolving epistemological and ontological holon. The situating of this holon in the holarchy of the Kosmos necessarily situates it in community. This context of community, in turn, embeds the learning and practice in a framework that is not only shaped by the "history, assumptions and cultural values and patterns of relationships" (Fenwick & Tennant, 2004, p, 63) of the culture or society, but also by the widest possible context of their existence,

their ancestor's existence and their descendant's existence. This is a meta-context which is truly holographic (Bohm, 1980; Talbot, 1991; Wilber, 1982b) and which provides a distinct sense of purpose, meaningful interaction and unity in diversity which allows all entities, relationships, experiences and phenomena to be equally respected, as well as providing the opportunity for deep reflection (adapted from Crowell, Caine, & Caine, 1998, pp. 116-121). Reflection is another of the embodied virtues of the harmonious ontology.

Learning therefore is not only encountered in all aspects of life, but it is actively acknowledged and shared with the community, thus creating deeper understanding across the broader base of all members of the community and becoming an integral part of the epistemological holarchy of the culture. Individual knowledge, as such, does not exist, because even the reflections that the individual engages in are shared with the community in order to better understand the experience. However, the individual's experience with and of, the knowledge is still recognised and valued, though it is this *experience with and of* the knowledge rather than the knowledge as *abstract fact* which is important. This type of shared meaning-making inherently "connects human beings to each other" (Miller, 2000d, p. 11). However, within these meta-narratives it does much more. When the learning that is experienced is rooted in cosmology, as it is in these meta-narratives, knowing becomes ontological rather than purely technical or vocational, and the *experience* of that learning and knowing becomes *deeper* and *richer*. "Ontological knowing is often experienced through mystical experience, metaphor, poetry, drama, liturgy, dreams, or music" (Oliver & Gershman, 1989). When this ontological knowing is integrated with the praxis (practice and reflection) of the whole community, it makes the community itself a powerful epistemological, ontological, axiological, rhetorical and methodological holarchy, within which it is understood that:

> …a person is being truly educated only when they pass their knowledge, experience and mastery on to someone else....one only begins to sense one's creative powers and abilities when one enters into moral relations with another person, becomes concerned with about increasing their spiritual wealth. (Sukhomlinsky, 1979-1980, pp. 358-359)

and:

> …every person must be an educator available at a moments notice to share knowledge, wisdom, skills and perceptions with those in need…This requires that we come to appreciate teaching as something every person does for everyone else and then ultimately what every person accomplishes for themselves. (Rose, 2000, p. 293)

which results in a situation where "each may become a creator, leaving behind a trace upon the Earth" (Sukhomlinsky, 1987, p. 116). In short, the meta-narratives discussed in Section two integrate learning, practice and reflection into the ongoing development of the community during which the community adapts to their changing environment (K. C. Laszlo & Laszlo, 2000) and forms not just a community of learning but also a dynamic community of practice.

Communities of learning and communities of practice continually show humanity the power of collective experience and reflection. When this occurs within a holistic frame of reference such as a cosmology (as described in Chapter six) then it facilitates *Shifts in Consciousness* of the sort which enable the experience of *Instances of Wholeness*, expanding the experience of community to include the Kosmos, and providing access to the omnipresent wisdom, insight and praxis (ubiquitous sapience) contained therein. This, in turn, provides the ultimate frame of reference and shows that the issues and problems that may confront humanity, not only today but whenever they occur, are actually multi-dimensional, multi-contextual and multi-temporal and, as such, they require holistic consideration in order to better understand them. It should be noted that this holistic consideration accepts that humanity's access to and understanding of, this omnipresent wisdom, insight and praxis or this ubiquitous sapience, can only ever be limited because it does not provide a "'description of reality as it is' but rather, ever-changing forms of insight, which can point to or indicate a reality that is implicit and not describable or specifiable in its totality" (Bohm, 1980, pp. 22-23). Hence, the most precious gift that the collective experience and reflection noted above can provide is:

> …the knowledge that ours is not the only act in town. Not only are there other acts out there, but some of them are even better than ours, at least occasionally! We learn that we need not carry the whole load but can share it with others, liberating us and empowering them. We learn that sometimes we are free to lay the load down altogether. The great community asks us to do only what we are able and trust the rest to other hands. (Palmer, 2000, p. 89)

However, given that humanity has a holarchical and holographic existence, and that everything in the universe that is known and unknown, everything that is done or not done, every decision that is made or not made, every action that is taken or not taken and everything that is said or not said affects everything else in the Kosmos, then humanity has a responsibility to exist in a morally, ethically and sustainably harmonious way in order to ensure there is "balance among individuality, community and universality" (Oliver &

Gershman, 1989, p. 63). This responsibility is embodied in the community structure of holistic leadership and personified in the archetype of the *Spiritual Warrior* (discussed earlier in this chapter).

Holistic leadership

I briefly discussed holistic leadership in Chapter two noting that it might alternatively be called *transformational* (Burns, 1978), *servant* (Greenleaf, 2003a; Naisbett & Aburdene, 1985), *moral* (Sergiovanni, 1992), *integral,* or *living* leadership (Schmidt, 2007) depending on the source and context within which the particular author is writing. However, in the meta-narratives explored and in the holarchical and holographic existence indicated by Figure 9.2, leadership is *not sought by an individual* but is *given by the community* on the basis that "leadership is everyone's vocation…when we live in the close-knit ecosystem called community, everyone follows and everyone leads" (Palmer, 2000, p. 74). This gift emerges from the cosmological understanding that each person, family, community, society and culture are constantly and actively engaged in maintaining the balance and harmony of the Kosmos. In order for them to be engaged in such a way and in such a task and everything that flows from it, the holistic leader must be conscious of the health and well-being of all levels of the holarchy simultaneously but not at the expense of their own well-being, including their inner health. As Rumi said, "if you are here unfaithfully with us/you're causing terrible damage" (1989, p. 56), that is, if the inner health of the holistic leader is not strong then they are not fully present, not faithfully with the community, not authentic. Holistic leadership embodies, with authenticity, what the Greeks might call *phrónêsis* or practical wisdom (de Guerre & Taylor, 2004), that is, the wisdom, insight and praxis of the holarchical and holographic Kosmos grounded in the everydayness of an earthly existence.

The attributes of holistic leadership can easily be extracted from the discussion of community and leadership orientation explored in each of the meta-narratives in Section two. However, it can be summed up as *a leadership for/of love and life*, where 'love' encompasses the honouring of all the relationships in the Kosmos where 'life' encompasses all the entities and all the phenomena of the Kosmos and where the holistic leader follows, what John D Schmidt calls, the 'three journeys of leadership'. That is, the "journey of self-realisation – experienced as three sub-journeys: the journey *to* presence; the journey *with* presence; and the journey *in* presence…also described as *becoming*

aware…becoming real…and becoming the hand of life" [author's emphasis] (2007, p. 29). It is this kind of leadership that has been described elsewhere as *visionary* (McLaughlin & Davidson, 2008).

Summary

Through the structures of community, communities of learning, communities of practice and holistic leadership the meta-narratives explored in Section two show that humanity can indeed exist with equanimity within the holarchical and holographic Kosmos, and that such an existence does not need to be primitive or de-technologised. Rather, they simply show that *Responsible Living* can maintain the balance and harmony of the complex holarchies of which humanity is part.

Responsible Living can be summed up as living in a way which acknowledges and appreciates the holarchical, holographic and non-linear nature of the Kosmos. That is, live in a way which:

- does not jeopardise the existence of any other entity now or in the future,
- respects and honours all entities, relationships, experiences and phenomena including the seemingly non-animate,
- respects and honours diversity in all existence,
- accepts that all entities, experiences, relationships and phenomena are sacred,
- balances virtuous action and non-action within the framework of a harmonious ontology,
- embodies the wisdom, insight and praxis inherent in the holarchical and holographic Kosmos,
- acknowledges and appreciates that all entities, experiences, relationships and phenomena are imbued with the same vital energy,
- acknowledges and appreciates that the consciousness of the One *is* the consciousness of the Community *and* the consciousness of the Kosmos,
- is engaged, mindful and present in every moment, every relationship and every experience,
- respects and honours the basic goodness of every entity, moment, relationship, experience and phenomenon with compassion, *Awe* and wonder,
- nourishes and enriches the soul,

- acknowledges and appreciates that an increasing order of oneness/wholeness does not mean an increasing order of importance or power,

- redresses marginalisation of individuals, families, communities, societies, cultures and the environment, and

- leaves the smallest ecological footprint on the contexts within which the individual, family, community, society and culture exist.

The role of holistic, transformative epistemologies in relation to the archetypes and structures identified in Section two

Human beings are complex systems and they can be considered both holons and holarchies and possibly even holograms (Talbot, 1991). They function on many levels simultaneously, seamlessly integrating sensual, physiological, emotional and intellectual elements into a cohesive experience that could be described as an epistemological holon and which becomes part of the greater epistemological holarchy. As these holarchies become embodied, *Shifts in Consciousness* occur and epistemology becomes ontology as they experience a different way of being (as discussed in Chapter two when I explored my own story). Human beings naturally seek deep connection with others. They are social beings continually seeking the social holarchies that they find in community. It is within these social holarchies that they find the gift of common oneness a gift that increases the innate skills for making meaning which human beings continually exhibit. Meaning is explored at not just an individual, familial, communal and societal level, but also within the contextual holarchy of the Kosmos. This is possible because of the way human beings can discern patterns that link new and previous personal experiences with those already established within the traditions and practices of their culture. They discern the part *and* the whole, and they discern both the object of their focus as well as all that is peripheral to that focus. These, too, become epistemological holons which fit into their existing and yet evolving epistemological and ontological holarchy. This evolution is largely an unconscious act leading to transformational understanding which is embodied and represents itself as intuition. The cumulative nature of their evolving and embodied understanding of the experiences that make up their lives allows sensual, physiological, emotional, intellectual and spiritual stimuli to be stored in meaningful and perhaps holographic ways (Battista, 1982; Bohm, 1980; Laszlo & Currivan, 2008; Pribram, 1982; Talbot, 1991; Weber & Bohm, 1982; Welwood, 1982). This facilitates meaningful retrieval later as they experience new situations, expanding and deepening existing

epistemological holarchies as new relationships between cognitive holons are formed. Finally, human beings are all unique since all the stimuli and experiences that make up their lives are unique. It is the embodiment of the concept of unity in diversity (collaborative conversation with Cajete, 2006) within the holarchy of the Kosmos which makes the holarchies of community strong yet adaptable and ultimately sustainable (adapted from Crowell et al., 1998, pp. 7-10).

Epistemologies or ways of knowing, originate in the worldview or cosmology of the culture or society. A mechanistic worldview tends to foster a reductionist, mechanistic, standardised and compartmentalised way of knowing (Miller, 1996; Miller, 2000a) as has been demonstrated by the Western worldview over the last five hundred years or so (Hawking, 2002; Hollick, 2007; Kuhn, 1957; Sloan, 1983; Tarnas, 1991, 2006). Whilst a holistic worldview or cosmology tends to foster holistic, integrated, interconnected, dynamic and cooperative ways of knowing (Miller, 1996; Miller, 2000a) as are demonstrated by many Indigenous cultures (see for example Cajete, 1994; George J Sefa Dei et al., 2000), some traditions or ontologies which might be described as Eastern (see for example Nakagawa, 2000) and writers, thinkers and practitioners who exist (or existed) within the Western worldview but embody (or embodied) holistic epistemologies (see for example Forbes, 2003; Miller, Karsten, Denton, Orr, & Colalillo Kates, 2005; Miller, 1991b), as explored in Section two.

The metaphor for a reductionist or mechanistic way of knowing could be the machine or clock (Hawking, 2002; Tarnas, 1991), whereas a metaphor for the holistic, integrated or interconnected way of knowing is more likely to be a:

> metaphor of emergence, flowing movement, growth and decay suggesting a continuous transformative process that brings to the fore two central principles which the mechanistic clockwork universe ignores: self-transformation and novelty. Living things come out of the stuff and the form of that which has perished; yet they come forth as unique and novel entities. They are not "created" by others. In some mysterious way they create themselves. (Oliver et al., 2002, p. 86)

Such a metaphor is less a hologram (as they tend to be understood) and more a *holomovement* (Bohm, 1980; Talbot, 1991; Weber & Bohm, 1982). That is the "undivided wholeness…[which] 'carries' an implicate order…[that is] unbroken and undivided totality" (Bohm, 1980, p. 191). This metaphor is reflected in the *Threefold Lotus Sutra*, first written down in 445-518 CE, which describes everything in the Kosmos as continually

emerging, continuing, transforming and vanishing in a never ending cycle of life, death and life (Kato et al., 1975; Niwano, 2005). Necessarily then, epistemologies rooted in a holistic cosmology provide a "deeper perspective which…bring[s] together the many facets of experience into a coherent and multifaceted apprehension of the world" (Oliver & Gershman, 1989, p. 158). Given the flowing and dynamic nature of this metaphor and the epistemology which evolves from a holistic cosmology itself, it may seem tautological to describe that epistemology as a holistic *and* transformative, especially since within the concept of the holomovement transformation is a given (as illustrated in the example of the *Threefold Lotus Sutra* noted above). However, I prefer to include the word transformative to *openly acknowledge* the flowing dynamism and ongoing transformation that occurs within both the epistemology to which I refer and the cosmology from which it originates.

In a general sense, the potentiality for holistic, transformative epistemologies exists at all levels of the holarchy with each level, orientation, anchoring strategy, entity, relationship, experience and phenomenon *informing all others*. Such epistemologies can also occur in a range of situations and as a result of a range of stimuli. However, generally, appropriate cultural forms and structures are required in order to *enable* the opportunities for these epistemologies to occur (conversation with Yoshida, 2006). These forms and structures should be based within the cultural and contextual specificities of both the community and the unique harmonious ontology which is appropriate to these specificities.

Holistic, transformative epistemologies can neither be described as being underpinned by a particular curriculum or methodology, nor can they be imposed prescriptively. However, as has been noted earlier, they are rooted in the holarchical and holographic existence of the individual, family, community, society and culture, and, therefore, they can be described as recognising:

- the multi-contextual, multi-temporal and multi-dimensional nature of existence,
- the non-linear nature of time,
- the holarchical and holographic nature of the Kosmos which provides an increasing order of wholeness but not an increasing order of importance or power,
- the holographic nature of the each moment, entity, experience, relationship and phenomenon,
- the sacredness and spirituality that is inherent in simply existing,
- that mystery is inherent in existence,

- that balance, harmony and order arise from dynamic mutuality, reciprocity and diversity,
- that existing brings inherent responsibility,
- that knowing is subjective, contextual and transient,
- that aesthetics, celebration and ritual are *culturally and contextually specific forms*,
- that societal structures can be re-visioned as *culturally and contextually specific forms* through *Un-learning*,
- *Un-learning* is inherent in *Being*,
- *Being* is an act of *Doing*, and
- *Doing* includes purposeful and mindful *action* as well as purposeful and mindful *non-action*.

The individual, family, community, society and culture (within the holarchy noted in Figure 9.2) experience *Instances of Wholeness* through *Shifts in Consciousness* which provides insights into the holarchical, holographic and non-linear nature of the holomovement that is the Kosmos. Such *Instances of Wholeness* and *Shifts in Consciousness* can be facilitated in a number of ways, including the active and mindful participation in cultural forms such as was discussed in Section two. This participation allows the practitioner to experience flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), that is "order in consciousness" (p. 39) or the "merging of action and awareness" (p. 53). However, these *Instances of Wholeness* and *Shifts in Consciousness* can also occur though deep engagement with holistic, transformative epistemologies.

Such epistemologies, when coupled with the deep reflection and self-knowing that is inherent in the active participation in the holomovement of the Kosmos, enhance the practitioner's inherently *spiritual* nature. This, in turn, strengthens their connection to the *vital energy* with which all entities, relationships, experiences and phenomena are imbued and integrates their consciousness with the consciousness of the universe. This spiritual connection is further enhanced through the undertaking of contemplative practices and mindful practical activity (as discussed in Section two), which again naturally employ holistic, transformative epistemologies to embody the knowledge, skills and experiences gained as the practitioner's understanding of both the practice and themselves increases. This embodiment breaks down the barriers between mind, body, soul and Kosmos and again allows the practitioner to experience flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). It is the development of an ongoing, dynamic, yet deeply authentic relationship with all levels of

the Kosmos which provides access to the epistemology rooted in the wisdom, insight and praxis contained therein – what I described earlier as *Ubiquitous Sapience*.

The role of a harmonious ontology in potentially facilitating a sustainable future for all beings

My ongoing immersion and investigation has led me to conclude that the development of a harmonious ontology rooted in the cultural and contextual specificities of the individual, family, community, society and culture is central to the meta-narratives explored. This harmonious ontology manifests itself, not just in the virtues an individual, family, community, society, or culture embody, but also in the forms and structures of those societies or cultures and in the roles and responsibilities that individuals, families and communities assume within those societies and cultures. Whilst my investigation has shown that appropriate cultural forms and structures are required in order to enable the opportunities for holistic, transformative epistemologies to occur, it can also be shown that such epistemologies are, paradoxically, impossible to separate from the creation, continuation and evolution of those same forms and structures, such epistemologies all co-exist within the holarchy of the holomovement of the Kosmos. It is this complete permeation through the entire holarchy which makes the harmonious ontology so significant and which has the effect of enfranchising every entity, experience, relationship and phenomenon with essentially the same virtuous, balanced way of being forming a classic example of the holomovement. This holomovement is not constrained by dimension, by context, or by time. It exists in all there ever was, all there ever will be, all there ever might have been and all there ever might be. It is the ultimate measure for sustainability.

It is this holomovement, what Weber calls "an intelligent and compassionate energy" (Weber, 1982, p. 43), which provides both the harmonious ontology and the potentiality to facilitate a sustainable future for all beings. Such potentiality is only limited by the capacity of humanity to see beyond the experience of their reality, projected by the western worldview, with a new form of insight (Bohm, 1980).

> Once the primary importance of Insight becomes clear, it also becomes startlingly evident that this is the point at which genuine connection between human values and meaning and knowledge is to be sought [and] the fundamental wholeness that joins scientific Insight, artistic Insight and moral Insight again comes into view. (Sloan, 1983, p. 130)

In this chapter I have described the archetypes and structures which appear to synthesise the roles and responsibilities that the meta-narratives explored seem to ascribe to humanity. I have explored the role holistic, transformative epistemologies could have in relation to those archetypes and structures as well as the potential role holistic, transformative epistemologies and a harmonious ontology could have in facilitating a sustainable future for all beings.

Section four: Reflections and applications

Chapter ten – Reflections and applications

Overview

Section four comprises only this chapter. It initially provides a reflection, of what I have come to understand as the holographic nature of, not only my life but of all life (Bohm, 1980; Laszlo & Currivan, 2008; Talbot, 1991; Wilber, 1982b). I have provided this reflection to complement the description of my story provided in Chapter two. It is important to reiterate that this understanding is emergent; constantly unfolding, enfolding and evolving as I progress along my journey in search of wholeness and meaning.

This chapter then articulates my understanding of the concepts of community, adult learning, meaningful work and sustainability as they reflect my investigation to date. It also describes the relationship between these concepts and the harmonious ontology explored in Chapter nine. Finally, it provides an overview of the opportunities for further research in the areas of these concepts and their role in creating a sustainable future for humanity using a harmonious ontology as a guide.

Reflection (a emergent understanding of a holographic life)

The purpose of this document is to investigate a harmonious ontology which could facilitate the conditions for holistic, transformative epistemologies within the structures of a community, with a view to creating a sustainable future for all beings. As I noted in Chapter one, the decision to undertake this investigation was prompted by the social, cultural, vocational, educational and spiritual experiences of my life rather than from any perceived ontological or epistemological hierarchy. As such, the methodology I employed (described in Chapters one, six and seven) also originated from those experiences.

In the years since I began my post-graduate study, my approach to this investigation has drawn criticism largely in four areas. First, there has been criticism with regard to the relevance of such meta-narratives to the issues facing humanity in the twenty-first century. Second, with regard to the perception that a researcher from an Anglo-Saxon/Viking background, such as myself, should not be researching meta-narratives from outside their cultural context, what Dr. Cajete calls "cultural schizophrenia" (collaborative conversation, 2006). Third, with regard to the perception that it is inappropriate to

highlight for discussion and synthesis only certain orientations, strategies or cultural forms which may be evident within the meta-narratives explored since this removes them from their original cultural context, what Dr. Cajete again calls the "all or none apology" (collaborative conversation, 2006). Finally, there has been criticism around my decision to root this investigation in my own life and my own experiences, what I call the 'academic elitism gambit', where approaches which are different from the academic mainstream are marginalised through criticisms of validity (discussed in Chapter six). However following Palmer, I based this investigation in my own experiences because "The story of my journey is no more or less important than anyone else's. It is simply the best source of data I have on a subject where generalizations often fail but truth may be found in the details" (2000, p. 19).

The aim of this investigation is not and never has been, to appropriate those cultures, traditions or ontologies, or even to replicate their culturally-specific forms. Neither is it to infer that *all* the values that those cultures, traditions or ontologies sometimes embody, or the frameworks they utilise are necessarily *entirely* appropriate for the twenty-first century (Heron, 1998; Hollick, 2007). Rather, the aim of this investigation is to "learn lessons and gain key insights…[and then] begin to creatively synthesise in ways that make sense to address the issues we're facing today" (conversation with Cajete, 2006), whilst accepting that all cultures, all traditions and all ontologies, like all individuals, have their failings (conversation with Cajete, 2006). The motivation for the mode of inquiry that I have utilised throughout of my post-graduate study has always been that:

> …if you really take a look at the epistemological, guiding paradigm [of the cultures, traditions, or ontologies in question] the focus has always been that whatever you do and however, you do it, it should sustain life, it is for life's sake…it should extend life, that's the ultimate guiding bottom line and that whatever you do has to be compared to that guiding paradigm, guiding issue, that guiding mandate. (conversation with Cajete, 2006)

That the Western worldview facilitates the marginalisation of individuals, communities, societies and whole cultures, and that this marginalisation permeates all levels of the world's social, cultural, economical and environmental holarchies cannot really be denied. This is particularly true when that worldview is considered with regard to its ability to be life-sustaining, life-extending and life-enhancing, not just with regard to human life but with regard to *all life.* Such marginalisation is largely perpetuated by the separation that is created by the scientific and technical knowing inherent in the Western worldview

(Hawking, 1998, 2002; Hollick, 2007; Kuhn, 1957; Oliver & Gershman, 1989), which creates an imbalance, a duality or a dichotomy in humanity's relationship with the Kosmos and everything therein. "Technical knowing sees survival of self and extensions of self as the purpose of existence" (Oliver & Gershman, 1989, p. 15). This means that in such scientific and technical knowing the self is separated from the world and therefore is also separated from any object, entity, relationship, experience or phenomenon that is sought to be understood. This separation permeates every aspect of humanity's existence including understanding, knowing, learning and even *thought* itself (Bohm, 1980, 1994; Krishnamurti, 1994b, 2000c, 2002, 2005; Laszlo & Currivan, 2008; Laszlo et al., 2003; McTaggart, 2008a, 2008b). It is this separation which perpetuates the heroic struggle mythology (discussed in Chapter one) which is dominant in the Western worldview, that is, the struggle of the heroic individual *against* the Other, where the Other can be *any* object, entity, relationship, experience or phenomenon both within, and outside that worldview, thus facilitating the marginalisation referred to above.

In my case, the progression to this separation began with my earliest schooling and was perpetuated by the social, educational and vocational experiences of my life until I was thirty years old. This separation continued and increased over decades despite the periodic epistemologically and ontologically transformative experiences from my mid-teenage years onwards (as described in Chapter two) that I have called *Instances of Wholeness*. My immersion in the hierarchical, reductionist, technical and physically and spiritually violent environment of the workplace caused me to develop individualistic, survivalistic behaviours that manifested as sarcastic, aggressive, political, seemingly self-protective and yet, ultimately, self-destructive tendencies. The tension of existing in survival mode and behaving in ways which *seemed* necessary for the context I existed within was incredibly stressful and took its toll on my health in general, and body in particular. This stress was caused by the fact that the patterns of behaviour I was exhibiting were antithetical to the way of being I unconsciously yearned for and had periodically experienced as *Instances of Wholeness*. These patterns of behaviour led to a duality and tension in my mind which compounded the stress I was experiencing. In turn this caused more extreme survivalistic tendencies. I felt as if I was continually descending in a spiral of hopelessness, negativity, isolation and darkness. However, rather than perpetuating the heroic struggle mythology in me, I was experiencing the opposite and equally common effect of the dualism inherent in the Western worldview—marginalisation, that is, marginalisation of the self (mind and

body), and of the Self (soul). My experience and observation of such marginalisation has been the single most important motivator in my undertaking this investigation and I believe, in its widest sense, is the single biggest issue facing humanity in the twenty-first century. Many times in this document I have referred to the universe or Kosmos as being *holographic* (Bohm, 1980; Laszlo & Currivan, 2008; Talbot, 1991; Wilber, 1982b) or more latterly as being a *holomovement* (Bohm, 1980; Ferguson, 1982; Talbot, 1991; Weber & Bohm, 1982). I will now briefly explain the relationship between the holographic concept and the marginalisation described in Chapter two.

A hologram can be understood to be a three-dimensional image, not unlike a three-dimensional photograph or painting in appearance, except that it can be observed from three hundred and sixty degrees around its centre like a sculpture or other three-dimensional physical object can. However, *unlike* a photograph, painting or even a sculpture, when a hologram is broken into many pieces, each piece contains a complete version of the original image—only smaller and perhaps a little less clear (Bohm, 1980; Ferguson, 1982; Laszlo & Currivan, 2008; Talbot, 1991). The concept of a hologram perfectly captures the key understanding that *within* each entity, relationship, experience and phenomenon can be observed the entire Kosmos, each is a complete microcosm of the whole (Bohm, 1980; Ferguson, 1982; Laszlo & Currivan, 2008; Talbot, 1991; Weber & Bohm, 1982). However, *like* a photograph, painting or sculpture, a hologram is static and stasis does not adequately represent the dynamism which is observable in the constant unfolding, enfolding and evolving of the Kosmos, as well as the dynamism within each entity, relationship, experience and phenomenon therein. Acknowledging this, Bohm developed the concept of the *holomovement*, which, as I have previously noted, he describes as the "undivided wholeness…[which] 'carries' an implicate order…[the] unbroken and undivided totality" (1980, p. 191). The holomovement is not constrained by context, time or dimension. It exists in all there ever was, all there ever will be, all there ever *might have* been and all there ever *might yet* be. The concept of the holomovement also supports the understanding of the shared, collective, global, or cosmic consciousness noted previously (Bache, 2008; Laszlo, 2006a, 2006c, 2007, 2008b; Laszlo & Currivan, 2008; Laszlo et al., 2003; McTaggart, 2008a; Talbot, 1991) and, as such, more accurately captures the concept of the constant unfolding, enfolding and evolving Kosmos – creating and recreating itself from the "'seeds' or templates of information from prior universes" (de Quincey, 2006, p. 111).

This emergent understanding of the concepts of the *hologram* and the *holomovement* is important to my investigation because it acknowledges that every entity, relationship, experience and phenomenon within the Kosmos are holons (Koestler, 1967; Smuts, 1999 as discussed in Chapters one and two) and holons exhibit holographic tendencies (de Quincey, 2006; Laszlo & Currivan, 2008). These tendencies can be discerned at the micro-level of Quarks ("the building blocks of protons, neutrons and other particles" (Soanes, 1990, p. 926)), they can be discerned at the meta-level of the Kosmos; and they can also be discerned at every level in between. This includes at the levels of the individual, the family, the community, the corporation, the society, the culture, the nation, the transnational alliance and the planet. In addition, the holarchical nature of the Kosmos means that there is an inherent pattern which connects everything within it, both animate and seemingly non-animate (Bateson, 2002; Koestler, 1967; Laszlo & Currivan, 2008; McTaggart, 2008a, 2008b; Smuts, 1999).

Holons are what Koestler termed as Janus-faced (1967), that is, they have both inherent integrative (dependent) and inherent self-assertive (autonomous) tendencies which are held in dynamic balance, like the yin and yang of Eastern thought (de Quincey, 2006; Laszlo & Currivan, 2008). Change, facilitated by their self-assertive tendencies, can be viewed as evolution, but dependence, facilitated by their integrative tendencies, can be viewed as stability or stasis. The integrative and self-assertive tension which exists within holons and therefore holarchies directly relates to the issue of marginalisation since holons and holarchies are arguably the perfect example of community, and communities by definition share common beliefs and behaviours. When the integrative tendencies of holons are applied to groups of human beings they lead to the perpetuation of the group's ontological holons, otherwise known as their long-held beliefs and behaviours or their worldview. It is now understood that these ontological holons, these beliefs and behaviours, *could* transcend time and location thus allowing each generation to build on the beliefs and behaviours of the combined previous generations (Bache, 2008; Laszlo, 2006a, 2006c, 2007, 2008b, 2006d; Laszlo & Currivan, 2008; Laszlo et al., 2003). Such transcendence allows cultures to learn from their ancestor's mistakes but it also allows the perpetuation of marginalising behaviours, or the ongoing misuse of power or influence, such as can be observed throughout the history of humanity culminating in the litany of self-destructive behaviours noted in Chapter one. This transcendence also has the effect of making such beliefs and behaviours resilient to change, which ensures that not only are the same

patterns of behaviour that occur at an individual and familial level are likely to occur at a communal, societal and cultural level however they are also likely to occur at a national, transnational and global level. This is an important and subtle point which is central to my investigations because it shows that the marginalisation I experienced and discussed in Chapter two is the *same marginalisation experienced by and perpetuated upon, millions of people, both within and outside that worldview, world over*.

It is also important to realise, however, that the same transcendence which perpetuates such marginalisation is capable of perpetuating *Shifts in Consciousness*, which in turn *could* perpetuate the *Consciousness Revolution* (Henderson & Ikeda, 2004; Laszlo & Currivan, 2008; Laszlo et al., 2003; McTaggart, 2008a, 2008b; Petit, 2008) which some writers, thinkers and practitioners feel is desperately overdue, and others feel is perhaps imminent (conversation with London, 2007). This latter realisation reinforces the awareness that, as holographic as the life and experiences described in Chapter two may have been, the existence I had been experiencing *was not the only existence that was possible*, just as the dominant consciousness in the West is not the only consciousness accessible by humanity, and the Western worldview is clearly not the only ontology in the Kosmos. The Kosmos is continually creating itself, unfolding, enfolding and evolving and therefore:

> …all human beings, without exception, are continually creating themselves with the life-energy that is flowing within them. To create is [their] life's mission and without it there would be no life. For better or worse, [they] continue to live because [they] continue to create. (Saionji, 2003, p. 71)

The acknowledgement of the Kosmos as the holomovement also acknowledges that human beings are an integral part of that holomovement. It acknowledges that within the human experience of the Kosmos' continuous unfolding, enfolding and evolving, the experience of what might be described as ultimate reality (Skolimowski, 1994) is not possible. However, it also acknowledges that the human *experience* of reality changes as *insight* deepens (Bohm, 1980; Laszlo & Currivan, 2008; Laszlo et al., 2003; Sloan, 1983) effectively meaning *human reality changes as insight deepens*. As Sloan notes:

> …all genuinely new knowledge comes by means of passionate, energy-filled insight that penetrates and pierces through our ordinary ways of thinking.…When we fail to attend to the central role in knowing of this deep…insight, we become trapped in the already given. (1983, p. 141)

This is another important and subtle point because it infers that the reality of marginalisation and marginalising behaviours that are experienced by millions of people world over can be transformed through the deepening of insight into the complex holarchies within which humanity exists. It also infers that this change can occur through the shifting of the current global consciousness to a new paradigm (Kuhn, 1970) and perhaps a deeper level of awareness (Henderson & Ikeda, 2004; Laszlo & Currivan, 2008; Laszlo et al., 2003; McTaggart, 2008a, 2008b; Petit, 2008), that is:

> ...not an awareness that is going to lead to anger, but an awareness that allows us to see through the illusions that we place around [existence]. To start to understand the narratives we create, become aware of them, the narratives of our expectations of society, of many different things. [Awareness] that…almost gives permission to…create and not be constrained by that [marginalising] world, to recognise it, to see it as it is and not be constrained by it. (conversation with Crowell, 2007)

Essentially, this awareness, which could be described as an *Instance of Wholeness*, means that "as people understand the things that are impeding their development they are actually moved to create change and address some of those issues" (conversation with Jeanetta, 2006) and is again reflective of the *Shifts in Consciousness* to which I have referred throughout this document.

Evolving understanding (the concepts of community, adult learning, meaningful work and sustainability as they reflect my investigation to date)

As I described in Chapter two, my experience of the academy began concurrently both as an adult learner exploring the world of adult and vocational education and as an educator working with adults from a range of social, cultural, vocational, educational and spiritual backgrounds. It soon became clear to me that, although these adult learners came from a diverse range of backgrounds, they had all experienced the marginalisation that is facilitated by the structures of modern Australian society to some degree. This realisation led me to consider the relationship between community, adult learning, meaningful work and sustainability. It also acted as a catalyst to begin the journey which has created this document.

The investigation I have undertaken can be summed up as developing the understanding that:

> …our ultimate purpose is to co-create a whole person, a whole community, a whole civilisation, a whole planet and a whole universe. This is our responsibility, but we do not bear it alone. We cannot create a whole self on our own, let alone a whole planet or universe. But we can play our part. Collectively and with Spirit, we have the power to guide the future of our planet and cosmos into the paths of love and truth, beauty and wisdom. (Hollick, 2007, p. 367)

I will now articulate my emergent understanding of the concepts of community, adult learning, meaningful work and sustainability.

Community

This investigation has led me to an understanding of *Community* in its widest possible sense, that is, that every entity, relationship, experience and phenomenon within the Kosmos are interconnected in a "multi-directional open flow [of] nested systems" (de Quincey, 2006, p. 119) that Koestler termed a holarchy (1967). This understanding reveals that the meta-community that humanity exists within is the Kosmos which is a community that is continually unfolding, enfolding and evolving.

This understanding, only slightly acknowledged within the Western worldview, is implicit in the societies and cultures which exist within the meta-narratives explored. The integration of this understanding within their forms and structures is so complete that the acknowledgement, appreciation and articulation of it are inherent in all aspects of life. The individual, family and community do not exist in isolation, but are intimately connected to the multiple holarchies within which they exist. They reinforce these connections through their daily practices which simultaneously sustain not just their own, but also the whole culture's or society's emotional, physical and spiritual well-being. Finally, they honour this interconnected existence through rituals, rites, celebrations, dance, music and other aesthetics. This honouring continually renews and strengthens their connection to every other entity, relationship, experience and phenomenon in the Kosmos. For these cultures and societies community does not necessarily have to mean the co-location of people, nor does it necessarily mean the rootedness of a people in a certain place. "Rather, it means never losing the awareness that [they] are connected…it is about being fully open to the reality of relationship whether or not [they] are alone" (Palmer, 2004, p. 55).

This openness to the reality of relationship is not constrained by context, time or dimension. It is rooted in the acknowledgement, appreciation and articulation of humanity as an integral part of the holomovement of the Kosmos, where it is clear that the

consciousness of the one *is* the consciousness of the community *and* the consciousness of the Kosmos. In this way *Community* is inextricably intertwined with the individual's, the family's, the community's, the society's or the culture's way of being (ontology) and their way of knowing (epistemology). It is also inextricably intertwined with their values (axiology), with their approach to life (methodology), and with their use of language (rhetoric). This integration into the holomovement of the Kosmos provides a framework which individuals, families, communities and societies apply to all entities, experiences, relationships and phenomena they encounter. This framework can adequately be articulated as a *Cosmology*. Since cosmology:

> …not only includes the various domains of the universe…it also implies that these various domains are somehow interrelated and connected. It refers not only to various facets of knowing…it refers also to the fact that these various ways of knowing and kinds of knowledge are all different aspects of common reality. None is supreme; none is exclusive; none is discounted. (Oliver & Gershman, 1989, pp. 56-57)

A key understanding that has emerged from my immersion and investigation is that the *Kosmos* is the meta-holarchy that all entities, relationships, experiences and phenomena exist within. *Community* is the embodiment of this holarchy at all of its levels. *Cosmology* provides the emotional, physical and spiritual framework for the individual, family, community and society, and *Consciousness* provides the pattern that connects.

Throughout this document I have referred to the damage caused to individuals, families, communities, societies and the environment by the Western worldview and the consciousness which emerges from it. The understanding of community presented here can help redress this damage through the creation of a *Holistic Consciousness*, that is, a consciousness which does not simply exist on an individual, familial, communal, societal or even on a global level, but one which has evolved to such an extent that humanity as a whole adopts a harmonious ontology redressing the imbalance in its actions and interactions with the other entities, relationships, experiences and phenomena in the Kosmos. The adoption of such an ontology cannot be prescribed or imposed in a top-down approach, but rather it must evolve *within* the complexity of contexts that the individual, family, community or society exist within. However, this evolution inevitably must originate at the level of the individual. Chödrön says "the reason that people harm other people, the reason that the planet is polluted and the people and animals are not doing so well these days is that individuals do not know or trust themselves enough" (2001a, pp. 4-

5). In order for this evolution to occur the individual must first be *Whole*, and attaining wholeness is no small task (as discussed in Chapter two), especially when the individual exists within the fragmentist Western worldview. The journey to wholeness begins when the individual seeks to truly know themselves. In order to achieve this, the individual must engage in examination of themselves, not their physical or mental self but their moral, ethical and spiritual self. In many Eastern traditions this self-examination begins through some form of contemplative practice, such as Shamatha-Vipashyana meditation (also known as tranquility-insight meditation (Chödrön, 2001a)) for example. This examination is not an exercise in narcissism or ego, neither is it an exercise in finding fault with one's self, rather it is merely an effort to "discover what inherently we have to offer the world" (Trungpa, 1984, p. 29) and "mak[ing] friends with what we reject, what we see as "bad" in ourselves and in other people" (Chödrön, 2001a, pp. 6-7).

There is an underlying goodness in both the Kosmos *and* in the individual which are, according to my investigation and subsequent emergent understanding, one and the same—the Kosmos *is* the individual and the individual *is* the Kosmos. This goodness is rooted in simplicity and reciprocity, balance and harmony, *Awe* and wonder, courage and compassion, gentleness and appreciation, generosity and humility. Goodness is everywhere and the individual's experience of goodness is inherently nourishing of the soul, whether from within or without. Embodying a harmonious ontology cannot be achieved without discovering this innate goodness. Such innateness cannot be grasped and used per se, but it can be acknowledged, appreciated and articulated through compassionate and mindful action *and* mindful non-action. However, it is common for individuals who begin to observe and experience such goodness in themselves to take it and themselves too seriously (Trungpa, 1984). This reintroduces ego and upsets the balance and harmony, both of the Self and of the Self *as* the Kosmos. The answer to this imbalance is humour. Humour is an integral part of both the meta-narratives explored and a harmonious ontology. Humour is not the same as comedy it is essentially "appreciating reality with a light touch" (Trungpa, 1984, p. 32), the egoless appreciation of one's innate goodness and the goodness in all entities, relationships, experiences and phenomena.

The embodiment of a harmonious ontology also requires deep reflection, not only in order to observe and experience one's own goodness but also to ensure one's own physical, emotional and spiritual health and well-being. A person cannot be whole and therefore

embody a harmonious ontology, when they are out of balance with themselves (Bache, 2008; Henderson & Ikeda, 2004; McTaggart, 2008b; Miller, 1994; Trungpa, 1984). The Western worldview rarely offers people the opportunity of a lifestyle which promotes wholeness, and the services which are supposed to promote well-being rarely discover the root causes of people's physical, emotional and spiritual health issues (Reid et al., 1988). Maintaining good physical, emotional and spiritual health can be achieved through a combination of contemplative practice and physical activity when combined with an appropriate lifestyle and attitude (as discussed in Section two). Together these practices allow the individual to synchronise their mind and body, giving them the experience of simplicity and dignity whilst providing a deep connection to the Self, the Earth, and the Kosmos. Such deep reflection and deep connection leads to fearlessness. That is acknowledging the fear that is experienced in everyday life and "moving beyond that fear" (Trungpa, 1984, p. 48). Fearlessness is examining one's fear, going beyond it and relaxing with it. It is "working with the softness of the human heart" (Trungpa, 1984, p. 49). Relaxing in such a way as this leads to a softness and gentleness in thought and action, a balance and harmony which allows the individual to extend themselves and open up to the sensual experience of the Kosmos.

Embodying a harmonious ontology is to live a virtuous life with honesty and integrity, where *Living* occurs spontaneously in every moment, relationship, experience and phenomena that the individual encounters, and where the individual experiences wholeness through living in the "fullest way" possible (Trungpa, 1984, p. 62). I noted earlier that the adoption of a harmonious ontology must start at the level of the individual, however, an individual cannot truly embody a harmonious ontology without deep engagement with the holarchies that they exist within. It is also the case that a holistic consciousness, as I suggested would be required to redress the imbalance that has evolved in the holarchy of the Earth, cannot be created simply through individuals embodying a harmonious ontology. Indeed if an individual has thoughts or ambitions of transforming or fixing societal or global problems, or even creating an awakened or enlightened society, then the action of having such thoughts or ambitions creates an imbalance both within the Self and within the Kosmos. Rather than engaging in such grandiose thoughts or ambitions the individual should simply serve the needs of their family and their community. Because:

> …we are not talking about some utopia where everyone's enlightened. We're talking about a culture of human beings who know the awakened nature of basic goodness and invoke its

energy in order to courageously extend themselves to others. Their motivation is allied with compassion, love and wisdom. This enlightened attitude is not inhibited: it accommodates and incorporates the vicissitudes of life. (Mipham, 2003, p. 197)

For it is through adopting and embodying a harmonious ontology (engaging in a virtuous and balanced life, and serving their family and community with compassion, wisdom and love) that transformation occurs at the familial and communal level. Such service is mindful and requires the courage of a Warrior (as discussed in Chapter nine Mipham, 2003; Nakae, 2008; Trungpa, 1984).

In the meta-narratives explored, this embodying of a harmonious ontology is formalised through cultural forms and is observable through the eight orientations previously described. Trungpa noted "we should respect life on that mundane level, because the only way to implement [a new] vision for society is to bring it down to the situation of a single household" (1984, p. 92). This mundane level grounds the actions of the individual in the wisdom, insight and praxis of not just their own society or culture but also of the Kosmos, since at every level of the holarchy can be observed the whole. It grounds the individual in the *Now* (Trungpa, 1984) and such grounding removes the imbalance of ego, greed, or desire. My investigation has revealed that mindful service of the family and community is the only way to transform the Self, the family and the community, although again if transformation is the aim then the service ceases to be mindful. "The vision of enlightened society is that tradition and culture and wisdom and dignity can be experienced *now* and kept *now* on everyone's part. In that way there can be no corruption at all" [author's emphasis] (Trungpa, 1984, p. 97).

For the people who exist within the meta-narratives explored their whole existence has purpose and that purpose is to *Live* in the world. Such living is not passive it is active and it is mindful. People who experience such living are experiencing what has been called an *Autotelic*, optimal or flow experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Derived from the Greek for 'Self' and 'Goal', an autotelic experience is one where there is no "expectation of some future benefit, but simply the doing itself is the reward" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 67). This is an important and subtle point because, although there are potentially, social, cultural, vocational, educational or financial rewards in successfully completing certain activities, to undertake those activities with the aim of achieving those rewards is not autotelic rather it is exotelic (done for external reasons only). An autotelic experience is

uncalculated and unmediated. Simply put, it is one where the person, the activity and the context are one.

> The autotelic experience, or flow, lifts the course of life to a different level. Alienation gives way to involvement, enjoyment replaces boredom, helplessness turns to a feeling of control and psychic energy works to reinforce the sense of self, instead off being lost in the service of external goals. When experience is intrinsically rewarding life is justified in the present, instead of being held hostage to a hypothetical future gain. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 69)

Examples of autotelic experiences abound in literature from all cultures and from all ages, and they do not only apply to individuals. Autotelic, optimal, or flow experiences can equally be encountered by families, communities, or even societies. However, they are not experienced in the extremes of life because at the extremes all the available psychic energy is being used to simply survive, or perhaps to understand how to operate in the contexts they exist within, or perhaps in frustration at the constraints which are imposed on them by those contexts (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Flow, then, can be understood as an ecological experience that is encountered in the challenge of living *Mindfully* (as described earlier in this chapter).

The understanding of community that has emerged from this investigation brings with it a challenge for humanity in the twenty-first century. That is 'how to live in the *Now*—how to live mindfully in the service of one's family and community, whilst engaging deeply in the multiple holarchies of which the individual and family and community are part?' The Western worldview provides many stimuli and distractions which attempt to entice the individual away from the *Now* either by creating desire, or by inciting fear of the consequences of not embracing such stimuli and distractions (Chödrön, 2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2002; Hanh, 1999, 2002, 2005; Krishnamurti, 1953, 1994b, 2000c, 2005; Mipham, 2003; Trungpa, 1984), both of which facilitate marginalisation. Hence the creation and continuation of community as illustrated by the meta-narratives explored requires a balanced and harmonious way of being that I describe as a harmonious ontology to provide the physical, emotional and spiritual framework for the individual, the family and the community.

Adult learning

As noted earlier, the understanding of *Community* which I articulated above informed all the other understandings which emerged and evolved for me during this investigation. As

such, it forms an epistemological holarchy within which my understandings of adult learning, meaningful work and sustainability exist. It should be noted that I have chosen to refer to adult learning rather than simply learning or epistemology at this stage simply because it is within the world of post-compulsory or adult learning that I have been immersed for the last twelve years, and that is where the effects of marginalisation are most visible to me, not to say that marginalisation does not exist within all strata of society and all societies.

It appears from my investigation that the learning a person engages in throughout their life has a role and responsibility in assisting individuals, families, communities and societies to meet the challenges that humanity faces in the twenty-first century (noted previously); just as it also appears that the adult learning which is currently facilitated by the Western worldview does not meet this role and responsibility. Not only does the Western worldview rarely offer people the opportunity to experience a lifestyle which promotes balance and harmony – wholeness, but the formal educative structures inherent therein actively seek to separate the individual from the complex contexts they exist within – fragmentation, in order to promote the increased specialisation which is required to maintain the Western worldview. "Consequently… personal differences of style, desire and aspiration [are] blurred by the need to conform to standards and pre-established rules" (Miller, 2000d, p. 5). This increased specialisation ensures that both children and adults are channelled from an early age to follow a specific branch of formal education, in order to study specific content, within a specific context, at a specific level, for a specific result or to fulfil a specific role in the structures of society (conversation with Anderson, 2006; London, 2007). However, this level of specificity largely fails to take into account the informal learning that occurs when a person engages in any activity. It also fails to take into account the social, cultural, vocational, educational and spiritual experiences of the individual, and the experience of the individual as an integral part of the holomovement of the Kosmos. It is these failures which lead to the kind of negative educational and vocational experiences I discussed in Chapter two, and to the marginalisation of those who do not respond to this level of specificity. Unfortunately:

> …our political, business and educational leaders seek to train young people to fulfil their roles in a vast, impersonal social machine…Modern education equips individuals to compete for success in a system that only cares about their skills and credentials [and formal educational structures]…serve a political and economic agenda of competition, production and corporate profit. (Miller, 2000d, pp. 5-6)

This is an individualistic agenda, and the failure to accept the holarchical and holographic nature of all entities, relationships, experiences and phenomena is a failure to recognise the potential of engaging with the *Sapience* (wisdom, insight and praxis) existent in the shared consciousness of a family, community, society, culture or indeed of the Kosmos (Bache, 2008; Laszlo, 2006a, 2006c, 2007, 2008b, 2006d; Laszlo & Currivan, 2008; Laszlo et al., 2003; McTaggart, 2008a; Talbot, 1991).

For the societies and cultures which exist within the meta-narratives explored, the separation which exists within the Western worldview simply does not apply. Not only do these cultures and societies acknowledge, appreciate and articulate this holarchical and holographic existence they also honour and celebrate it. So the challenge which humanity faces in the twenty-first century has already been addressed by these societies and cultures through the adoption and embodiment of a harmonious ontology, and learning necessarily occurs at all levels of such a harmonious ontology (as described in Chapter nine). In this way, there is no differentiation between learning and life and, therefore, there is no differentiation between the learning which is experienced by children and that which is experienced by adults. It is simply the depth of understanding which increases as their immersion in and engagement with, the complex holarchies of which they are part and their awareness of Self and Self as Kosmos, deepens. Within such societies and cultures "young people [are] welcomed into the adult culture through apprenticeship and deeply meaningful rites of passage… [they are] inducted or should we say conducted into a social fabric where they [have] identities that [give] their lives meaning" (Miller, 2000d, p. 5). The use of the term apprenticeship in this passage should not be understood to be the "exploitative and class-bound institution" (Miller, 2000d, p. 6) that characterised apprenticeships of the last three hundred years of Western worldview. Rather, it should be understood in terms of the mentoring of the less experienced by those with more experience, regardless of age, in some particular skill or area of knowledge. In such societies and cultures it is experience, rather then theoretical knowledge, which is important since:

> …it is experience that engages the entire body and mind; it is experience that triggers emotions; it is experience through which we perceive the whole as well as the parts; it is experience that provides us with the opportunities to be engaged and challenged; it is experience through which our complex interactions result in rich social relationships; it is experience through which we are exposed to meaningful contexts; and so on. (Caine et al., 1999, p. 239)

Such experience and the learning associated with it transcends the simple reductionist "vocationalisation of character" (Shor, 1980, p. 52) of the Western worldview, which traps "the mind into a world of the static and the contained" (Oliver & Gershman, 1989, p. 224), which Shor calls 'reification' and what Oliver and Gershman say results in "a consciousness of our lives as pieces or fragments which seem omnipresent and immovable" (1989, p. 224). Rather than learning which is understood to be the accumulation of specific facts, theories, formulae, knowledge and skills, the learning of the societies and cultures which exist within the meta-narratives explored is iterative, reflective and ongoing—never static or contained. Learning occurs at every level of the harmonious ontology as a continuous flow back and forth between the individual, the familial, the communal, the societal and the spiritual. This flow is reminiscent of the never ending cycle of life which is described in the *Threefold Lotus Sutra*—that everything emerges, continues, transforms and vanishes (Kato et al., 1975; Niwano, 2005), such as it is with learning. Originating in a unique life situation, a learning experience first *emerges* as an experience and then *continues* as empirical knowledge. As the individual engages in deep reflection on that empirical knowledge and their part in the experience of it, the learning begins to *transform*. Such deep reflection utilises the cosmological framework of the sapience (wisdom, insight and praxis) contained in the holomovement of the Kosmos. The utilisation of this framework transforms the initial learning experience into the experience of *Unlearning*. It is this *Unlearning* (conversation with Crowell, 2007) which facilitates *Shifts in Consciousness* and the creation of *Instances of Wholeness*, what Gerber describes as *Awakening* (2001). Through *Unlearning* the narrow structures of the initial experience are broken down and the initial learning experience *vanishes* to be replaced with the embodied wisdom, insight and praxis which form an epistemological and ontological holon which is then subjected to the same iterative process of transformation.

For the cultures and societies which exist within the meta-narratives explored, learning is about continually making meaning out of current and past individual, familial, communal and societal encounters, creating both an individual and a shared understanding. This understanding then serves as a base for interpreting the next experience rather than for the separate reductionist analysis of each encounter. This is an important and subtle point, because in this way the learning in which individuals, families, communities and societies engage is integrated into their everyday life and experiences allowing them to simultaneously explore and support, the wants, needs and desires of the individual, family,

community and society, whilst not adversely affecting the complex contexts within which they are situated *now or in the future*.

This is another key understanding which has emerged from my investigation and may assist humanity to meet the challenge it faces in the twenty-first century (noted previously). However, it is worth remembering that at the heart of this understanding is the adoption and embodiment of a harmonious ontology and that such a harmonious ontology necessarily originates with the individual. Thich Nhat Hanh said:

> …before we can make deep changes in our lives, we have to look into our diet, our way of consuming. We have to live in such a way that we stop consuming the things that poison us and intoxicate us. Then, we will have the strength to allow the best in us to arise and we will no longer be the victims of anger, of frustration. (2005, p. 19)

He is not only referring to consuming in the form of eating and drinking but also in the form of the accumulation of wealth and goods. He is reinforcing the point that the individual needs to engage in self-examination and deep reflection not only of their physical, emotional, moral, ethical and spiritual self, but also their attitudes, practices and lifestyle. In short, this self-examination and deep reflection allows the individual to examine how they exist and interact within the holomovement of the Kosmos, since everything that is done or not done, any decision that is made or not made, any action that is taken or not taken, anything that is said or not said, and everything that is known and unknown affects everything else in the Kosmos.

The learning which is inherent in a harmonious ontology also helps maintain the balance and harmony of the holarchies of which the individual is part. However, it will not be until a critical mass of individuals, families, communities, cultures and societies adopt and embody such a harmonious ontology that such a holistic consciousness, as I suggest, is required to address the imbalance in the Western worldview, *could* be created (Bache, 2008; Laszlo et al., 2003; McTaggart, 2008b). So a further challenge for humanity in the twenty-first century may be how to create such a critical mass of individuals, families, communities, cultures and societies which have adopted and embodied such a harmonious ontology?

In Chapter nine, I noted that not only is learning inherent in a harmonious ontology, but what I have described as holistic, transformative epistemologies can facilitate the creation of such a harmonious ontology. Such epistemologies simultaneously engage the individual

with every level of the holomovement. This engagement transcends both time and dimension and connects the individual, family, community, culture and society to the shared consciousness of the Kosmos and the infinite experiences therein. This transcendent engagement enhances the individual's ability to deeply and authentically engage with whatever entities, relationships, experiences and phenomena they encounter 'fearlessly' (Mipham, 2003; Nakae, 2008; Trungpa, 1984) and to better understand themselves as they participate in the unfolding, enfolding and evolving of the Kosmos.

Finally, it is worth reiterating that the learning inherent within both a harmonious ontology and holistic, transformative epistemologies requires *deep engagement* with and *deep reflection* on:

- the individual's physical, mental, moral, ethical and spiritual self and the Self as Kosmos, *and*
- dialogue and *Presence* with great teachers (not necessarily from within the academy), *and*
- a broad range of culturally-specific texts (the use of the word 'texts' here should be understood to include any kind of written, oral and visual sources), *and*
- the immediate and complex holarchies within which the individual, family, community and society exist, *and*
- the many and varied encounters the individual has with other entities, relationships, experiences and phenomena, both within and without, of their immediate contexts, *and*
- the mystery of the holomovement of the Kosmos and the shared consciousness that is inherent therein.

However, such deep engagement and reflection also needs to be combined with *dedication*, *patience* and *commitment* as well as the adoption of *an appropriate lifestyle* and *attitude* as indicated by both a harmonious ontology and the cultural and contextual specificities within which the individual, family, community and society exist.

Meaningful work

Work is an interesting concept and depending on the worldview within which it exists it can mean many things, if indeed it exists as a concept at all.

> It is too simplistic to regard work as solely a way to earn money. Work has a far higher value in human motivation than that. Work satisfies many human needs. Work should provide a sense of achievement, a sense of responsibility, a time structure to the day, week and even year, opportunities for social interaction, opportunities for the development of self-esteem and identity, occasions for shared experiences and links to goal and purposes that transcend those of the individual such as participation in collective…effort. (Burns, 1995, pp. 26-27)

Csikszentmihalyi notes that in traditional cultures (what he describes as hunter-gatherer cultures and their descendants) people spend only three to five hours per day undertaking the basic tasks required in order to survive, such as "providing for food, shelter, clothing and tools. They spend the rest of the day in conversation, resting, or dancing" (1990, p. 143). However, he contrasts this with the industrial workers of Europe in the nineteenth century who were "often forced to spend twelve-hour days, six days a week, toiling in grim factories or dangerous mines" (1990, p. 143). It would be easy to disregard such examples as these by noting that humanity now finds itself in a largely technologised and mechanised culture or in the twenty-first century and not the nineteenth, however Burns goes on to say that "for many workers, work does not provide many of these satisfactions [noted above (pp. 26-27)], particularly those in mundane, routine, repetitive activities which reflect the scientific or Fordist organisational approach" (Burns, 1995, p. 28). Indeed humanity may well exist in a technologised and mechanised culture and in the twenty-first and not the nineteenth century, but such conditions as Csikszentmihalyi describes are not necessarily a thing of the past. As I noted in Chapter two, I spent the first twelve years of my working life working between ten and fifteen hours per day, often six and occasionally seven days a week, for generally poor pay, in high-pressure and high-stress shift work which tended to lead either to isolation or to engagement in often mutually destructive behaviours. This is not my only experience of work-related stress and I am certainly not the only person to experience it. Stress is endemic within the workforces that support the structures and institutions of Western worldview and, as such, it is a symptom of the marginalising tendencies therein and is caused by the fact that within the Western worldview "no attempt is made to match persons to their meaningful work (or in education, to assist them toward the self-knowledge that such matching requires)" (Bethel, 2000, p. 260), as shown from my own experiences described in Chapter two.

The formal educational structures of the Western worldview continually channel people towards increasingly specific societal roles. Channelling *formally* begins when children are in their mid-teenage years, however, it *informally* begins as soon as a child is born. The

social, cultural, educational, vocational and financial holarchies that a child is born into immediately begin to influence the role that child will play in society. This is not to say that other options are not possible, just not likely. This channelling has been described to me as simply a form of violence, perpetuated by Western society on its own people, forcing them to engage in work and other activity which is not meaningful to them and therefore ultimately soul-numbing, or possibly even soul-destroying (conversations with Colalillo Kates, 2006a; Goodman, 2006). Bethel goes on to say that "persons who by accident or good fortune find their meaningful work are extremely few and the vast majority, having no experience to the contrary, endorse the prevailing view that work is an unpleasant necessity" (2000, p. 260). I was certainly not guided into a career which would match me with my meaningful work (Bethel, 2000) or my vocation (Palmer, 2000), that is, work which would allow me to connect to *Spirit* (conversation with London, 2007) or work which would allow mw to connect to, what I describe in this document as, *Ubiquitous Sapience*.

My failure to emerge from the formal educational structures in the mould of a so-called successful student immediately ensured I followed one of two pre-determined channels in the eyes of my peers, family and society at large. Those channels simply were either unemployment (with the possibility of periodic short-term jobs), or entering a trade. At the time I was considered lucky to be channelled into a trade, for trades had a proud tradition and a tradesperson could still theoretically be a success, as defined by the Western worldview, if they worked hard and had the determination to succeed, perhaps ending up owning their own business. Consequently, I found myself working in an industry that I not only disliked intensely, but also an industry which was certainly killing me physically and spiritually, a situation that, in a sign of the pervasiveness and perversity of that dominant view of success, left me feeling conflicted. Surely I should have felt grateful to have the opportunity to have a job with the theoretical prospects of earning a reasonable living and the possibility of working overseas (something I actually did have the opportunity to do) rather than resent it as I did? This is not to say that being a Chef, or other similar occupations for that matter, is not a perfectly honourable trade, or that it might not suit others (Bethel, 2000). It is simply that the situation I found myself in upon preparing to leave school left me few options and the longer I continued along the path that was determined for me from those limited options the more manipulated, violated and alienated I felt.

> The reason that work is regarded as an unpleasant necessity in modern societies is that persons, by innate disposition, differ greatly from one another with regard to the work that is theirs to do. For each person, there are many kinds of good, useful, productive work that are nevertheless intrinsically unrewarding. On the other hand, there are a few (usually interrelated) kinds of work that will be experienced as intrinsically rewarding, such that the individual will identify with them and on his or her own initiative invest the best of his or her self in them. (Bethel, 2000, p. 260)

Krishnamurti says that we create both images of ourselves and images of others, and it is these images which interact with each other rather than our true selves (Krishnamurti, 1994b, 2000c). This situation has been described as "wearing other people's faces" (Sarton, 1974, p. 156). My dissatisfaction at life and work was rooted in my failure to:

> …listen to my life telling me who I am…[to] listen for the truths and values at the heart of my own identity …[that is] the standards by which I cannot help but live if I am living my own life. (Palmer, 2000, pp. 4-5)

However, it was also a failure of family, community, society and the formal educational structures (both compulsory and post-compulsory) to show me that I could and should listen to these things, that they could and should direct my life and that I could and should be myself rather an image I project, or a mask that other people create. If this was true for me it was and is, undoubtedly true for others, a realisation which later prompted me to undertake this and previous post-graduate study.

As I noted earlier, the concept and nature of work has different meanings and different emphases in different cultures. Notwithstanding Burns' comments earlier (1995, pp. 26-27), within the Western worldview work can generally be understood to mean "activity involving mental or physical effort done in order to achieve a result; such activity as a means of earning income" (Soanes, 1990, p. 1331). Whereas, in some Indigenous cultures, it is the *participation* in an activity that is paramount not the amount or quality of output (Cajete, 1994) and in others it is *cooperation* and *collaboration* which is valued. In Chinese Confucian society "the full realisation of human potential depends on the proper cultivation of relationships with other people and on properly fulfilling one's role within society as a whole" (Cleary, 1991), and in Japanese society, *service of something bigger than the individual* is paramount. In Medieval times Samurai would serve their Lord and their Clan "even if that [meant] that he [sic] must first sacrifice himself [sic] in the process" (Klemmer, 2008, p. xii). However, this service was not described as 'work', as with the other societies and cultures mentioned. *Service* was the Samurai's *life* and there was no distinction between the two. It is also important to note that the role of a Samurai

and therefore this concept of Service, did not only apply to warriors but also to retainers and administrators (Cleary, 2008; Nitobe, 2005; Stone, 2001; Yamamoto, 2002). In more modern times this has translated into Japanese employees having an almost fanatical loyalty to the large corporations they work for, however, this too led to the troubling situation of employees never taking leave and becoming overwhelmed with stress (Klemmer, 2008). Extremism (such as fanatical loyalty) in any arena upsets the balance and harmony of the holarchies of which the individual is part. However, the culturally-specific construct of Service, as it is defined here, does mean that within such cultures "employment is usually of the lifetime variety, with the employer (just as with the Lord, in Medieval times) taking a deep interest in the employee's personal life, family, children and so on" (Stone, 2001, p. xi). It is important to note that in this example *Service* does not equate to being *Servile*. The motivation for Service is intrinsic as "one does not want to be a servant for any kind of external recognition" (Greenleaf, 2003b, p. 87), and to be *Servile* is extrinsic, that is, to have that service hierarchically imposed from outside. Donnelly describes this kind of *Intrinsic Service* as *Engaged Service*.

> Engaged service is more than just an act, it is a commitment. It is a commitment to life, to betterment, to self and other. It is a commitment to the realisation that a singular act generated by a single individual is the pathway to heal the universe and that single steps are the root of all transformation. (2002, p. 306)

My investigation has revealed that, in the societies and cultures which exist within the meta-narratives explored, it is *Engaged Service* which links work, community and a harmonious ontology. It is also important to understand that such *Engaged Service* also extends to leadership. This kind of leadership (Greenleaf, 2003a; Naisbett & Aburdene, 1985) was explored in detail within the orientation of *Community and Leadership* in each of the meta-narratives discussed in Section two as well as being discussed in Chapter nine as *holistic* leadership (Molinaro, 1999). What is clear is that within these societies and cultures, *Service* is directly related to the understanding of *Community* noted earlier.

> [Since] each of us is intimately connected to the other and in recognising that connection, we are moved to greater service; to a more profound understanding, appreciation and tolerance of one another; to an honest self-examination of our attitudes and behaviour; and to the building of community. What is most important in life are the relationships we establish and maintain with other people. (Beazley, 2003, pp. 5-6)

Such Service "offers a means to personal growth—spiritually, professionally, emotionally and intellectually" (Spears, 2003, p. 24), integrating all domains of human experience into a single ontological holon. However:

> …as long as we did not care how much we ate, whether or not we lived in solid and well-decorated homes, or whether we could afford the latest fruits of technology, the necessity of working would rest lightly on our shoulders…But the more psychic energy we invest in material goals and the more improbable the goals grow to be, the more difficult it becomes to make them true. Then we need increasingly high inputs of labour, mental and physical, as well as inputs of natural resources, to satisfy escalating expectations. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 144)

The need of modern global society to provide such 'increasingly high inputs' in order to support the excessive consumption of those within, or aspiring to, the Western worldview (Henderson & Ikeda, 2004; Laszlo, 2003, 2006b, 2008a) means that such Service is not encouraged, and therefore it is difficult for individuals, families, communities and societies worldwide to experience a *Meaningful Life*.

In order for people to live a meaningful life, that is, for people to spend their time engaged in activity which allows them not only to meet their full potential but also to do something which positively affects the holarchies within which they are exist, they need to be engaged in *Meaningful Work*. Molinaro believes that this is expressed in:

> …an inner desire to work in organisations that foster collaborative cultures instead of competitive ones. Organisations where the leaders inspire through respect, integrity and trust instead of through control and manipulation. Organisations that are socially responsible and where people share a compelling purpose beyond the relentless pursuit of the bottom line. We want experiences at work to be meaningful rather than empty. (1999, p. 13)

Meaningful work is any undertaking which allows a person to be their True Selves, which benefits the widest possible context within which they are situated, which does not harm any entity (including themselves), relationship, experience or phenomenon and which encourages imagination and passion (Boverie & Kroth, 2004). Simply stated meaningful work, also described as soulful work or authentic work (Bethel, 2000), is both an expression of the soul (Fox, 1994; Miller, 2000) and work which nourishes or enriches the soul (Miller, 2000). It is work that "we need to approach with attention, presence and a sense of mystery" (Miller, 2000, p. 45) what I have described elsewhere as mindfulness or engagement. The experience of such meaningful work can also become a flow experience. Csikszentmihalyi notes that when "work [is] undertaken as a flow activity [it] is the best

way to fulfill human potentialities" (1990, p. 149). He describes the flow experience as being the unification of a number of elements including:

- a challenging activity (but not necessarily a physical activity) that requires skills (but not necessarily physical skills);

- the merging of action and awareness (there is no separation between the thinking and the doing, it is an act of *Being*);

- there are clear goals (related to the challenge being undertaken) and immediate feedback (such feedback merges doing and *Being*);

- a sense of control (influencing an outcome when the potentiality for other outcomes is likely);

- loss of self-consciousness (loss of sense of self as separate from the context it exists within or interconnectedness with to contexts the self exists within); and,

- the transformation of time (taking the person 'out of time' as it's usually understood). (adapted from Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, pp. 49-67)

Meaningful work is inherent in the holarchical and holographic existence of such societies and cultures as exist within the meta-narratives explored and necessarily then, in the harmonious ontology they adopt and embody. The adoption and embodiment of a harmonious ontology requires constant self-examination and deep reflection by each individual into their moral, ethical and spiritual self. Such examination and reflection necessarily explores the activities and work they are engaged in and involves asking questions such as 'what kind of work is the individual engaged in?' 'What is the effect of this work on the individual and other the workers?' 'What is the effect on those who experience the output of this work?' 'What is the effect on the environment both now and into the future?' 'Who makes decisions about the work and its effects?' 'Whose methods, assumptions and values dominate both in the workplace and in the provision and experience of its output?' 'Who does and who does not benefit from it?' (adapted from a conversation with Goodman, 2006). This constant examination, exploration and reflection of the work that individuals, families, communities and societies engage in shows that simply engaging in *any* kind of work is *not* ipso facto fundamentally better than having no work at all. It also shows that *any* kind of work cannot automatically be considered to be of benefit to the individual workers, their families, the community within which the workplace is situated, the wider society, the environment, or indeed the planet itself. Examination, exploration and reflection of the kind noted above *cannot* originate from within the structures of the Western worldview since, despite its analytical biases, it does not facilitate "critically examining the depth and breadth of human experience—qualities

of becoming, qualities of being; qualities of knowing; qualities of participation and connection" (Oliver & Gershman, 1989, p. 55), whereas a harmonious ontology formed as it is within a cosmological framework does.

Sustainability

Sustainability is a complex concept which can be interpreted in a number of ways depending on the worldview from which it is being discussed. As I noted previously, the understanding of *Community*, which I articulated earlier in this Section, forms an epistemological holarchy within which my understandings of adult learning, meaningful work and sustainability exist. It follows then that my interpretation of the concept of sustainability is inevitably cosmological in origin; an interpretation which evolved as I progressed through this research and my immersion in the meta-narratives explored deepened.

My investigation has led me to the understanding that the holomovement of the Kosmos is in *dynamic balance*, like the yin and yang of Eastern thought. When something occurs to upset this balance, then, it is the *Kosmos itself which redresses the imbalance*. Such redress is necessarily cosmic in scale and, as such, the needs of the individual entity, relationship, experience, or phenomenon are secondary to the needs of the whole. This kind of dynamic balancing and rebalancing occurs at all levels of all the holarchies that form the holomovement of the Kosmos. Therefore, when there is an imbalance in the Earth's holarchy, it is the Earth itself which redresses that imbalance in order to regain its equanimity. Again, depending on the scale of the imbalance, the redress is of an equivalent scale so when a large imbalance is experienced a large redress will also be experienced. It is reasonably safe to assume then that the cataclysmic events which the Earth has suffered in the past were either caused by the introduction of an imbalance from within or outside the holarchy, or caused by the Earth's natural tendency (as with any holarchy) to redress such an imbalance.

The critical issue for humanity is that since the needs of the individual entity, relationship, experience or phenomenon are secondary to the needs of the whole, in this case the Earth, the future of humanity *and the complexity of holarchies which sustain human life* cannot be assured if an imbalance of cataclysmic proportions is introduced into the Earth's holarchy. As I noted in Chapter one:

> History suggests that humans tend to construct increasingly complex technological and social organisational systems which Finally, get "out of control"...as humans we have the capacity to organise vast numbers of people and develop technologies to extend our powers almost beyond our imaginations, yet when we transcend the boundaries of simple face-to-face societies in very substantial ways, we seem unable to limit the excesses and abuses of this technical power. (Oliver et al., 2002, p. 25)

This means that whilst the periodic imbalance and the subsequent redressing of balance is normal in the continual unfolding, enfolding and evolving of the Kosmos as new universes emerge, continue, transform and then vanish in the never ending cycle of life, it is also likely that the more recent imbalances that the Earth has experienced are out of proportion to the immediate capacity of its normal rebalancing mechanisms and that humanity has played a crucial role in catalysing those recent imbalances. If true, this would mean that a more dramatic rebalancing would be required, and this possibly accounts for some of the Earth's behaviour which is currently being experienced. If this is indeed the case then that the past and present behaviours which humanity has/is engaged in could be facilitating its impending demise. Such a demise could occur either from the misuse of the technology and power which humanity has at its fingertips (Chargaff, 1977; Sloan, 1983), or from the Earth's attempts to redress the extreme imbalance it is experiencing. Either way, given Oliver, Canniff and Korhonen's assertion above (2002, p. 25), it appears that the Western worldview is not an appropriate starting point to support the Earth's attempts to redress the imbalance it is currently experiencing.

This realisation is valid when the concept of the Kosmos is understood as an unfolding, enfolding and evolving holomovement of epistemological, ontological, axiological, methodological and rhetorical; of physical, emotional and spiritual; of phenomenal, behavioural, relational and experiential; of individual, familial, communal and societal; of biological, chemical and elemental; of functional, perceptual and cosmological; and of temporal, dimensional and conceptual holons and holarchies (but to name a few). This is an understanding which appears to be almost beyond comprehension when viewed from the reductionist, scientific and analytic perspective of the Western worldview which is apparently inadequate to comprehend the ultimacy and yet non-ultimacy of such a holomovement.

For the scientific, rational and analytic mind of the Western worldview this understanding poses a challenge of global proportions and is a challenge which is immersed in paradox, that is, how to redress the imbalance that humanity has introduced into the holarchy of the

Earth without using the thinking, frameworks and paradigm which originated such an imbalance? This challenge is further complicated by the awareness that the most appropriate way to meet it could potentially be to do nothing and allow the Earth to redress the imbalance in its own way, as Thomas Berry (1988) suggests, of course this strategy might also facilitate the demise of humanity. On the surface such a challenge places humanity in an untenable position since, for the structures of the Western worldview, perpetuating that worldview is paramount and therefore action is infinitely more preferable to what they perceive as *inaction*. Indeed, in the Western worldview, the term sustainability generally refers to patterns of behaviour which support the perpetuation of the Western worldview, or the systems or structures which support it.

As I noted earlier, for the societies and cultures which exist within the meta-narratives explored, the observation and experience of the periodic imbalances and rebalancing in the more immediate holarchy of the Earth is normal. Indeed, for them the purpose of their Earthly existence is simply to participate fully in the continual unfolding, enfolding and evolving of the Earth, what I described earlier as *living in the world*. This existence is both holarchical and holographic, hence the concept of sustainability takes on an entirely different connotation, not least because the concepts of time, dimension and existence are fluid; an understanding which isn't generally supported by the Western worldview even though Quantum Physics has long since determined that *Time* and *Space* are relative. The integrative or conservative tendencies within that worldview have ensured that this understanding has yet to be applied in everyday life.

Rather than the perpetuation of a society's or a culture's worldview, the purpose of the societal and cultural structures within the meta-narratives explored is to ensure the adoption and embodiment of appropriate roles and responsibilities by each individual, family and community within the culture or society. These roles and responsibilities are inherent in the adoption and embodiment of a harmonious ontology which is based, not only in the cultural and contextual specificities of the immediate holarchies within which they exist, but also in the sapience (wisdom, insight and praxis) of previous generations which is accessible to them through their unique relationship with the Kosmos and the shared consciousness inherent therein.

For these societies and cultures, then, the challenge which faces those who inhabit the Western worldview of how to redress the imbalance that humanity has introduced into the

holarchy of the Earth, without using the thinking, frameworks and paradigm which originated such an imbalance, does not strictly apply. Obviously the same effects of the imbalance are being experienced by these societies and cultures and in some respects some of these societies and cultures are being adversely affected in more direct and immediate ways than the societies and cultures which exist within the Western worldview. However, the impact of and response to, the observation and experience of these effects is shaped by the perspective from which they are viewed, and from the perspective of these societies and cultures the challenge does not necessarily look the same. This is the case for a number of reasons. First, such societies and cultures are rooted in a holistic and non-linear cosmology rather than a reductionistic and linear worldview. Second, they utilise a framework and a consciousness which is outside that which originated the imbalance that the Earth is currently experiencing. Third, within these societies and cultures the individual simply engages in a virtuous and balanced life, serving their family and community with compassion, wisdom and love. Finally, the adoption and embodiment of a harmonious ontology is rooted in wisdom, humility and courage, and in the natural rhythm or flow of the Kosmos that the Japanese describe as *hyoshi* (Lowry, 1995; Ochiai, 2005).

For such societies and cultures the concept that humanity can actually affect the imbalance that the Earth is experiencing is seen as the height of arrogance and typical of the elitist attitude toward humanity that is inherent in the Western worldview. This does not mean however, that these societies and cultures have a fatalistic approach to this issue. It is just that they respect life on the "mundane level" (Trungpa, 1984, p. 92) and they affect the holarchies of which they are part on that mundane level too. In this way the actions of the individual are grounded in the wisdom, insight and praxis of every level of the Kosmos, whilst still grounding the individual in the *Now* (Trungpa, 1984). Rather than being *inaction* as it might appear to those within the Western worldview, such behaviour is actually *mindful action*, in that the individual is engaged in serving their family and community with compassion, wisdom and love, and *mindful non-action* in that the individual is consciously not attempting to engage in a wholesale transformation of humanity's existence. Such an attempt would again be the height of arrogance and reintroduce ego and desire into the holarchy, increasing the imbalance rather than assisting the rebalancing.

My investigation has shown that to serve the family and community mindfully, that is, engaging in a virtuous and balanced way with the immediate holarchies of which the individual is part, is to embody a harmonious ontology. Since holarchies are self-balancing, once there is a critical mass of individual, families, communities, societies and cultures engaged in *Living* a harmonious ontology, a 'holistic consciousness' will be created (as described earlier) and the holarchy of the Earth will rebalance itself in accordance with such a harmonious ontology.

What does all this mean? Implications and applications for this investigation

There are a number of implications for modern communities which emerge from this investigation. They apply across the whole range of human well-being including the physical, emotional and spiritual health of each individual, the role of learning and its connection to shifts in consciousness and shared consciousness, the way human beings interact with each other in their families, communities and societies, the role of organisations and the activity they undertake, communal, societal and organisational leadership, the way human beings interact with the environment, and the roles and responsibility of humanity within the immediate holarchy of the Earth and the greater holomovement of the Kosmos.

This investigation has continuously flowed back and forth between the individual, familial, communal, societal, universal and spiritual as appropriate. It began with the story of an individual and his search for wholeness and meaning and it will end in a similar fashion, for it is at the level of the individual that both the holographic nature of the Kosmos and the marginalisation caused by the Western worldview are most immediately observable.

The physical, the emotional and the spiritual health and well-being of each individual

Adachi Masahiro wrote "When the mind is disturbed, you cannot perform actions or act on principles, because of the way you are affected" (2008, p. 199). This means that when an individual is not *Whole*, their thoughts, decisions, actions, and therefore the consequences they and all other individuals experience, are the result of their fragmented and partialistic existence. Such a fragmented and partialistic existence begins when a person is young and continues throughout their life, exacerbated by the stresses and strains of living in

fragmented and partialistic contexts and working in fragmented and partialistic structures and systems. Ultimately a fragmented and partialistic existence means that the individual loses meaningful contact not only with holarchies they exist within but also with themselves. They become disconnected and this results in a vicious cycle of negativity which is self-perpetuating (Laszlo, 2006b). A fragmented and partialistic existence creates a fragmented and partialistic world, as Palmer says, "consciousness precedes being: consciousness, yours and mine can form, deform, or reform our world" (2000, p. 78).

Daisaku Ikeda says "any lasting global solutions to [the] challenges [humanity faces] must begin with what we might call individual human revolution" (2004, p. 1). Such an individual human revolution as is required to create the holistic consciousness referred to earlier relies on the nurturing and enhancement of the physical, emotional and spiritual well-being of every individual. There are a number of ways for individuals to do this including through undertaking such practices as were discussed in the orientations of *Contemplative practice* and *Practical activity* within each of the meta-narratives explored. In these activities, the nurturing and enhancement of the individual's physical, emotional and spiritual well-being occurs through the embodied awareness that Hocking, Haskell and Linds describe as "Bodymind" (2001a). That is "a way of being through which our embodied awareness unfolds through engaging/embracing our experiencing" (p. xviii). Dewey describes Bodymind as "what actually takes place when a living body is implicated in situations of discourse, communication and participation" (1929, p. 232). However, despite Hocking, Haskell and Linds' assertion to the contrary, my investigation has indicated that a person cannot achieve mastery, or Bodymind, through simply reading a book (Shimabukuro & Pellman, 1995; Suino, 1994; Zhang, 1998), or simply following someone else's movements or actions, although *direct transmission* from a Master is an integral aspect of achieving mastery (as discussed in Chapter five James, 2004; Shimabukuro & Pellman, 1995; Stevens, 2001; Suino, 1994; Zhang, 1998). The individual must also engage in the self-examination and deep reflection combined with some form of contemplative practice and practical activity, which may include one or more of the practices noted in Section two. Fully adopting and embodying the underlying principles associated with such practices requires courage, dedication and an appropriate attitude and lifestyle. However, once the practitioner seriously engages with the practice or practices in such a manner, then they will begin not only to feel their whole body and feel at home in it (Laszlo, 2006b), but they will also begin to reconnect with the multiple holarchies of

which they are part. They will be *Whole*, and this investigation reveals that whole individuals make whole families, and whole families make whole communities. Balance and harmony in one level of the holarchy necessarily facilitates balance and harmony at all levels.

The role of learning and its connection to shifts in consciousness and shared consciousness

This investigation has significant implications for communities in the area of epistemology – ways of knowing. It has revealed epistemologies which are both holistic and transformative. Holistic because they are based in the concept of Holism, that is within the Kosmos "…everything exists in relationship; in a context of connection and meaning…[It] means that the whole is comprised of a *pattern of relationships* that are not contained by the parts but ultimately defines them" [my emphasis] (Miller, 2000c, p. 21), and transformative because they *facilitate a permanent shift in consciousness* in the person who experiences them. Necessarily, then, that journey starts with the inner, the Self, where engaging in such practices as were discussed above allows the individual to transcend the fragmentation of the Self which they had previously experienced, and to transcend the "closed, circular logic" (Palmer, 1993, p. 13) of the dominant educative structures and the collective consciousness they create and support. This transcending means moving beyond the purely theoretical. It even means moving beyond the purely practical and purely vocational. It is moving beyond the modern concept of learning as the route to survival, to individualism, to distinction, to efficiency and to domination (Krishnamurti, 1953; Milani, 2000; Palmer, 1993). It is moving toward the concept of learning as an epistemology of *love* and *life*, where 'love' encompasses the celebrating and honouring of all the relationships in the Kosmos, and 'life' encompasses all the entities, all the experiences and all the phenomena of the Kosmos.

Engaging in holistic, transformative epistemologies is to engage in a *Spiritual Journey* through, and with, all levels of the holarchy that comprises the holomovement of the Kosmos, including the shared consciousness therein. Engagement which occurs through and with, all dimensions of the persons being including the physical, emotional, social, relational, vocational, moral, ethical, spiritual, temporal and aesthetic. To ensure such practice does not become narcissistic, ego-centric, self-indulgent, or indeed self-aggrandising, engaging in holistic, transformative epistemologies necessarily engages

the practitioner in community – that is, the gift of common oneness (discussion with Colalillo Kates, 2004). This engagement occurs with both the ultimate *Community* of the Kosmos, as well as with *Communities of Learning* and *Communities of Practice* (as discussed in Chapter nine), then "in a thousand ways, the relationships of the…community form the hearts and minds of [participants], shaping their sense of self and their relation to the world" (Palmer, 1993, p. 20).

Holistic, transformative epistemologies bring together the knower and the known as one epistemological holon. There is no separation between the Self and the experience and of course there is no separation between the Self and the holarchies they exist within, so there is no objectivity (Heron, 1998; Palmer, 1993; Skolimowski, 1994). In this way, for any entity, experience, relationship, or phenomenon that is engaged with, such an engagement is grounded in multiple layers of social, cultural, vocational, educational, physical, emotional, spiritual, temporal and dimensional contexts. This engagement in and with contextual holarchies reveals the "hidden wholeness" within which all life is immersed and upon which all life depends (Palmer, 1993, 2004). Ultimately engaging in holistic, transformative epistemologies is to engage in, what Skolimowski calls, a "Yoga of Transformation", that is to:

1. Become aware of your *conditioning*.

2. Become aware of *deep assumptions* which you are subconsciously upholding.

3. Become aware of the most important *values* that underlie the basic structure of your being and of your thinking.

4. Become aware of *how these assumptions and values guide and manipulate your behaviour, action, thinking*.

5. Become aware *which of these assumptions and values are undesirable…*

6. *Watch and observe the instances of your actions and behaviour…*

7. *Articulate alternative assumptions and values* by which you would like to be guided and inspired.

8. *Imagine forms of behaviour, actions and thinking* that would follow from the alternative assumptions/values.

9. *Deliberately try to bring about the forms of behaviour, thinking and actions* expressing the new assumptions. Implement your new assumptions in your daily life. Watch the process, repeat the process. Practice is important.

10. *Restructure your being* in the image of those assumptions…[author's emphasis]. (Skolimowski, 1994, pp. 240-241)

This type of process, when rooted in self-examination and deep reflection, allows the individual to co-create an epistemological, ontological, axiological, methodological and

rhetorical holarchy which naturally forms a holon within the familial, communal, societal and cultural holarchies the individual exists within. This means the learning of the individual becomes the learning of the family, the community, the society and the culture. Hence, an epistemologically transformative experience for the individual inevitably becomes an epistemologically transformative experience for the family, the community, the society and the culture. Given that, as this investigation suggests, "reality's ultimate structure is that of an organic, interrelated, mutually responsive community of being [the Kosmos. Then] relationships—not facts and reasons—are the key to reality; as we enter those relationships, knowledge of reality is unlocked" (Palmer, 1993, p. 53). Humanity is part of the ultimate community of the holomovement of the Kosmos and as insight deepens the human experience of reality also deepens and human beings are able to participate more fully in that community that is the holomovement of the Kosmos and in the shared consciousness or *Ubiquitous Sapience* therein.

The way human beings interact with each other in their families, communities and societies

This investigation has implications for how human beings interact with each other at every level of the holarchies within which they exist. This is important because currently there is an inequitable distribution of wealth and resources amongst the world's population which, in and of itself, has the potential to destroy the structures of human civilisation as well as the natural holarchies upon which that civilisation relies (Laszlo, 2003, 2006b; World Wildlife Fund, 2006). Krishnamurti said "by being fully aware of ourselves in all our relationships we…begin to discover those confusions and limitations within us of which we are now ignorant; and in being aware of them, we…understand and so dissolve them" (1953, p. 85). Such awareness indicates a shift or evolution in consciousness.

The first step in such an evolution is simply engaging in the self-examination and deep reflection mentioned earlier and adopting an appropriate attitude and lifestyle which is encompassed in what I described earlier as *Responsible Living* (see Chapter nine). As individuals begin to engage in this process they begin to strip away the shrouds of conditioning (Krishnamurti, 1953, 1994b, 2000c, 2005) created by the Western worldview. However, this is a very dangerous time since it is common for such individuals to want 'do something' or to rush in and 'fix' all the problems they are becoming aware of. Such a response not only tends to "create additional chaos" (Trungpa, 1984, p. 29) through the

imposition of one's ideas on another person, but also introduces ego and desire into the situation further upsetting the balance and harmony of the holarchy, even when the intentions are notionally good. Many harmful decisions are made every day on the back of, what subjectively appear to be, good intentions. However, this does not mean that toxic relationships cannot be transformed into compassionate relationships, just that if transformation is the aim then the individual's engagement with that relationship ceases to be mindful and the opportunities for corruption increase (Trungpa, 1984).

Responsible living is a harmonious ontology in action. It is a virtuous, balanced way of being or mindful action and non-action. It is serving the needs of the family and community with courage, humility and love. Such *Service* restores and maintains the balance and harmony of the complex holarchies of which humanity is part through mindful engagement. Hazel Henderson said, "when our human family, at last, see ourselves as a responsible, conscious part of the living body of the Earth, co-creating the future in symbiosis, we will restructure our knowledge, our universities and schools and our relationships" (1995, p. 51). As the individual begins to embody the principles of responsible living (see Chapter nine) they begin to engage mindfully with the holarchies of which they are part including the families, communities and societies they engage with. Such engagement leads them to identify sources of information which can be trusted to give regular, reliable and balanced viewpoints on the issues which affect the holarchies with which they engage. It leads them to develop and join networks and communities of like minded people and organisations with whom they can share information and experiences, and explore the underlying causes of and trends in, the issues which affect the holarchies with which they engage. It leads them to identify the beliefs and practices, both overt and covert, which are inherently toxic, that exist within the holarchies with which they engage. It leads them to support and frequent businesses, organisations, groups and networks which provide services which are not toxic to any level of the holarchies within which either party exists. Finally, it leads them to continually examine and reflect on their attitudes and lifestyle and to adjust them accordingly as their awareness of, and insight into, the holarchical and holographic nature of their existence deepens.

Responsible living is the first step in restructuring the relationships which occur throughout the holarchy of the Earth and the holomovement of the Kosmos. On an individual level, responsible living and mindful engagement lead the individual to

withdraw from relationships which are toxic (to any level of the holarchies of which they are part), and to engage with relationships that are healthy, harmonious and balanced.

The role of organisations and the activity they undertake

The role of organisations is very important in this investigation and in the social, vocational, educational and spiritual experiences that it is rooted in. By organisations I mean any structural entity that an individual may participate in, be engaged with, or be affected by, including educational institutions, businesses, service providers, layers of Government, social and community groups, religious or spiritual groups and the communities themselves (just to name a few). Such organisations form many of the holarchies that an individual exists within, and form many of the holons which comprise the holarchy of humanity. It is clear from this investigation that such holarchies have a significant impact on the life, experience and well-being of the individual. It is also clear that when the individual is engaged with an organisation as an employee, member, or service recipient, which itself is engaged in activity that is toxic to the holarchies within which that organisation exists (community, society, culture, Nation, environment, Earth – again just to name a few), then this toxicity also harms that individual, even if they don't experience the toxic elements directly. Examples would be the line worker that works in an armaments factory, or an employee of an agricultural company which produces seeds from whose plants the next generation of crops cannot be propagated, for example. This is an important and extremely subtle point and as such has far reaching consequences for all levels of the holarchies within which individuals and families exist.

Communal, societal and organisational leadership

This investigation has revealed that not only is the whole of humanity co-creating itself in each moment but it is also co-creating the reality it exists within, effectively meaning humanity is continually in the process of creating the world. For the leaders of communities, societies and organisations then "our complicity in world making is a source of awesome and sometimes painful responsibility" (Palmer, 2000, p. 78). However, *Responsible Living* and mindful engagement with all aspects of a person's existence can be viewed as "a source of profound hope for change" (Palmer, 2000, p. 78) since the leaders of communities, societies and organisations that embody the principles of responsible

living and mindful engagement in their personal and family life naturally embody those same principles in their communal, societal or organisational life.

Such embodiment and engagement leads them to engage with the community, society or organisation from a position of *Service* rather than self-interest or ego. It leads them to care deeply not only about their community, society or organisation but also about the people therein, the holarchies they exist within, and all the holarchies they engage with outside the immediate. It leads them to create the conditions within their community, society or organisation where engaging in contemplative practice and practical activity (such as were discussed Section two) and cultivating an appropriate lifestyle and attitude are valued and encouraged. It leads them to using open and non-hierarchical communication methodologies in order that all members of the community, society or organisation are fully informed about the issues and underlying causes which affect the holarchies and organisations within which they exist. It leads them to utilise consensual decision-making within their community, society or organisation. Finally, it leads them to create the conditions where the whole community, society or organisation is engaged continually in the cycle of learning, practice and reflection.

At a communal, societal or organisational level this means sourcing as much raw material as possible from local contexts. It means using production processes which are as efficient as possible whilst minimising energy usage in that processing. It means using processes which do not harm the individuals engaged in those processes or the holarchies within which they exist, now or in the future. It means minimising transport and storage. It means utilising 'green' energy sources. It means minimising wastage including materials, energy and packaging (every output is an input to another process). It means that the scale of production should be appropriate to the need of the immediate holarchies within which the community, society or organisation exist. It means creating tangible benefits for the community, society or organisation and all levels of the immediate holarchies within which they exist. It means that wealth is not created as an end in and of itself, and surpluses are kept to a minimum by reinvesting in the community, society or organisation. Finally, for communal, societal or organisational leaders it means they continually examine and reflect on the attitudes and practices of the community, society or organisation and adjust them accordingly as their awareness of, and insight into, the

holarchical and holographic nature of their existence deepens (adapted from Henderson & Ikeda, 2004; Laszlo, 2006b; Milani, 2000).

On a communal, societal or organisational level, responsible living and mindful engagement with all aspects of their existence ensures that the leader, with the full consultation of their constituency, will withdraw the community, society or organisation from relationships which are toxic (to any level of the holarchies of which they are part) and engage them in relationships that are healthy, harmonious and balanced.

The way human beings interact with the environment

This investigation has revealed the holarchical and holographic nature of all existence. This means that any practice which is engaged in at any level of the holarchies within which humanity exists, is replicated at all others. This means that practices which are environmentally damaging at a local level are inevitably environmentally damaging at *all* other levels of the holarchy. This is an important and subtle point because any practices which humanity engages in that are toxic to the environment introduce toxicity into the holarchy of humanity itself, either directly, in the case of the dumping of poisonous chemicals into the aquifers which enter the human body through drinking water, or indirectly, in the case of deforestation which ultimately facilitates drought leading to food shortages (Carson, 2002; Goodall, McAvoy, & Hudson, 2005). For example, over four hundred and twenty million people currently live in countries that do not have enough viable land to grow enough food for their domestic use due to environmental degradation (Laszlo, 2003). If consumption of the Earth's resources continues at its present rate, by 2050 the demands of humanity will exceed the Earth's capacity to meet those demands by two hundred percent (Laszlo, 2003, 2006b; World Wildlife Fund, 2006).

However, this investigation has also revealed that responsible living and mindful engagement with all aspects of the person's, community's, society's or organisation's existence have a positive effect on the environmental holarchies within which they exist. More importantly, these environmental holarchies are not necessarily bound by the physical location of the individuals, communities, societies or organisations but exist on a meso-level in relation to them. That is, the environmental holarchies which are impacted by the practices and attitudes of individuals, communities, societies and organisations are trans-regional (and trans-national) and trans-temporal.

On an environmental level, responsible living and mindful engagement with all aspects of their existence ensures that individuals, communities, societies or organisations withdraw from relationships, attitudes and behaviours which are toxic (to any level of the holarchies of which they are part) and engage in relationships, attitudes and behaviours that are healthy, harmonious and balanced.

The roles and responsibility of humanity within the immediate holarchy of the Earth and the greater holomovement of the Kosmos

Through the exploration of the meta-narratives this investigation has revealed that to serve the family and community mindfully, that is, engaging in a virtuous and balanced way with the immediate holarchies of which the individual is part, is to embody a harmonious ontology. Inherent in such a harmonious ontology are roles and responsibilities (as discussed in Chapters six and nine) for humanity to adopt and embody, roles and responsibilities which are rooted in the understanding that each person, family, community, organisation, society and culture are constantly *actively engaged* in maintaining the balance and harmony of the multiple holarchies of which they are part, and the understanding that this engagement ultimately ensures the balance and harmony of the holarchy of universe and beyond. This means ensuring the sustainability of humanity without adversely affecting the holarchies of which they are part.

Since holarchies are self-balancing once there is a critical mass of individual, families, communities, societies and cultures engaged in *Living* a harmonious ontology, a holistic consciousness will be created and the holarchy of the Earth will rebalance itself in accordance with such a harmonious ontology.

Opportunities for further investigations

If this investigation has highlighted anything, it is that the concept of reality which is supported by the Western worldview is exceptionally limiting and probably unsustainable, not just for humanity itself but for all the holarchies within which it exists. David Woolfson reported that in 2006 there was a joint meeting of the World Wisdom Council and the World Spirit Forum which concluded that:

> …humanity has, at best, a 10 year window of opportunity for a massive evolutionary shift in human consciousness and behaviour. Without such sweeping change in thought and

action we can anticipate widespread societal collapse and face the potential end of humanity as a viable species on the planet. (Woolfson, 2008, p. 425)

Hiroo Saionji agrees, saying the situation humanity now finds itself in is a "crisis in human consciousness – a crisis in human thinking, human values, human priorities and human responsibility" (2008, p. 17).

This investigation has highlighted that such a crisis in consciousness is not simply restricted to human consciousness, but it is also a crisis for the shared consciousness of the Kosmos. This means that there is an urgent need for further investigation into the relationship between the *Kosmos*, *Community*, *Cosmology* and *Consciousness* and their relevance for the future, not only of humanity, but also of the Earth itself. There is also a need for further investigation into the role of learning in the *Kosmos*, in *Community* and in *Cosmology*, and its connection to *Shifts in Consciousness* and *Shared Consciousness*. Saionji also believes that humanity should "develop a new dimension of consciousness and create a New Civilisation" (2008, p. 17). It is this dimension of consciousness which I refer to in this document as a *Holistic Consciousness*; a holistic consciousness which this investigation has revealed *may* be created by the embodiment of a *Harmonious Ontology* by a critical mass of individuals, families, communities, societies and cultures. This means that there is also an urgent need for investigation into how to *Live* in the *Now*; how to live *mindfully* in the *Service* of one's family and community whilst *engaging deeply* in the multiple holarchies of which the individual, family and community are part. That is, how to adopt and embody such a harmonious ontology and thence how to facilitate a critical mass as is required to create such a holistic consciousness. This necessarily means that there is also a need for further investigation in order to gain a deeper understanding of a harmonious ontology and its relationship with world cultures and traditions other than those explored herein, and into the roles and responsibilities of humanity within the immediate holarchy of the Earth and the greater holomovement of the Kosmos as other world cultures and traditions understand them.

My investigation has explored the nexus between community, adult learning, meaningful work and sustainability, revealing the need for further investigation not only into this nexus itself but also into the relationship of such aspects of life to a harmonious ontology, and into such a harmonious consciousness as is required to transform the "global crisis threatening our very survival" (Saionji, 2008, p. 17). However, this nexus also reveals

another opportunity for further investigation. That is how to nurture the development of *Spiritual Warriors* within the structures and organisations of humanity's communities, societies and cultures, and thence how to nurture the development of the holistic organisations they create? Inherent in this is the opportunity for further investigation into the challenge of how to create *networks* of individuals of what Saionji calls awakened citizens (2008) and what I have referred to as *Spiritual Warriors* and the holistic organisations they create, and the challenge of how to facilitate *communication between them*. Petit et al. (2008) call such organisations 'Pioneer Organisations' and Saionji notes that there are "awakened citizens…around the globe to bring about positive changes in all areas of society, including politics, economics, business and education" (2008, p. 18). David Woolfson, Gregorio Rivera and Lynn Holden believe that this challenge can be met by the creation of a "mega-network of like-minded organisations, groups, businesses and individuals actively addressing our shared societal and environmental challenges and opportunities – both globally and locally" (Woolfson, 2008, p. 427). This network was called the World Wisdom Alliance http://www.clubofbudapest.ca/wwa.html, however, in late 2008 it was superceded by the WorldShift Network http://www.worldshiftnetwork.org/home/index.html. My own experience of membership of networks such as the *Holistic Education Network* http://members.iinet.net.au/~rstack1/hent.htm, *The Forge* http://www.theforge.org/ and *Wiser Earth* http://www.wiserearth.org/ and of attending conferences and summits of individuals and organisations notionally working within the arenas of *Spirituality and Education*, *Soul in Education*, *Holistic Education*, *Transformative Education* and *Environmental Education* has shown me that creating such networks and facilitating the ongoing communications between them is no small challenge, often because such individuals and organisations do not have a shared language or a shared understanding of the holarchies they together exist within and their respective roles within them, an issue which Dr. London (as Chair of the organising committee for the 2007 *Spirituality in Education Network* Summit) had also encountered (collaborative conversation, 2007). The creation of such a mega-network as the WorldShift Network provides the opportunity for an investigation that explores how a diverse alliance of organisations, groups, businesses and individuals develop a shared language and shared understanding which transcends the fragmentation and specialisation which is facilitated by the Western worldview.

Summary

Smuts said "the character of "wholeness" meets us everywhere and points to something fundamental in the universe" (1999, p. 94). Throughout this journey and the social, cultural, vocational, educational and spiritual experiences it represents, I have, on occasion, encountered such characteristics of wholeness. However, as noted earlier, such encounters always appeared to be brief and transitory, creating a *desire* to have *more* such encounters. This desire forced an intellectual wedge between my inherent *awareness* of such fundamental wholeness in the universe, my *experience* of what I have called previously *Instances of Wholeness* and the *epistemological and ontological transformation* I was engaged in through my *immersion* in the meta-narratives explored in Section two. However, as I reach the end of this phase of my journey, I truly *feel* the wisdom of Zen Master Suzuki Roshi's statement of "in the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert's there are few" (cited in Chödrön, 2002, p. 1) and Krishnamurti's statement of "a man who says he knows is already dead. But the man who thinks "I do not know," who is discovering, finding out, who is not seeking an end, not thinking in terms of arriving or becoming – such a man is living and that living is truth" (Krishnamurti, 2000d, p. 8).

On reflection, in the end this document simply documents my journey in search of wholeness and meaning. However, I believe that during that journey I have been able to identify the relationship between the *Kosmos*, *Community*, *Cosmology* and *Consciousness*. Furthermore I believe I have been able to identify a *Harmonious Ontology* as being the catalyst for the creation of a *Holistic Consciousness* and to identify the relationship between each of these and *Holistic, Transformative Epistemologies*. As this journey draws to a close I find myself at the fringe of educational research, bridging any number of disciplines and approaches and yet in a place which may have the answer to the challenges humanity faces in the twenty-first century. Therefore it is with humility and sincerity that I say 'I do not *know* and my journey to *explore* the deepening awareness of what I *feel* to be true is just beginning'. I believe that my investigation, my journey in search of wholeness and meaning and this resultant document can contribute both to the dialectic called for by Oliver and Gershman (1989, p. 63), and to the work being undertaken by such pioneer organisations as described by Petit et al. (2008) to develop a sustainable future for all beings.

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