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ELEMENTAL WISDOM
IN TEACHER TRAINING

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Ph.D. in Educational Foundations
at
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To the aspirations of my teacher
Chögyam Trungpa
I dedicate this work.
May it serve to enliven his vision of an enlightened society.
Also to teachers everywhere, may they awaken to wisdom.
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Abstract

The use of contemplative techniques as a way to train teachers in intuition is explored. Psychotherapeutic models are compared with Buddhist teachings. It is argued that psychology has given teachers information about learning styles but little help in developing their own intuition. An exploration of water, earth, fire, air and ether as archetypal symbols in cosmology, myth, religion and the medical arts of our ancestors reveals the importance of these five elements as symbols of transformation and points to a more refined mode of perception.

The mandala principle in Tibetan Buddhist teachings, described in The Tibetan Book of the Dead, gives a map of this subtle field of archetypal energies which teachers can access as elemental wisdom. Each of the five elemental qualities is examined with respect to ordinary experience, emotional intensity and the wisdom potentials that teachers can cultivate. I am suggesting that the journey of learning and development is rooted in the transformation of emotional energies rather than in cognitive content. If teachers are to learn to facilitate students on this journey, then contemplative training in awareness of these non-dual elemental qualities might be a good way to help them develop the empathy, clarity, directness and patience required of a mature teacher.
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Introduction
A Map of the Territory
Introduction

A Map of the Territory

- Some exotic territories
- A boy and his mind
- Wisdom and wonder
- Oneness
- Exchanging universes
- The Western split
- Faith in statistics
- By-pass the weeds
- Learning style psychology
- Immanence
- Death and rebirth
- Goddesses and gods
- Humours and temperaments
- The in-between state
- Bright lights
- Energy distortions
- Theoretical musing
- Practical details

To evoke a sense of what I mean by elemental wisdom in this work I wander in and out of many different territories. The reader might sometimes feel like a traveler wandering in the narrow streets and busy markets of a foreign city. The pleasure and excitement of opening to the exotic can sometimes also lead to a sense of restlessness and a lack of familiar reference points. Although the topic of elemental wisdom has to do specifically with such moments of openness and existential groundlessness I provide this introduction as a map to help orient the reader before the journey begins. The one road that passes through all of these dissimilar territories is the notion of elemental wisdom, five intuitive ways of being.

To introduce the notion of using contemplative techniques as a way to train teachers in intuition I begin by telling my own story of climbing rocks as a six-year-old and discovering what I call a rhythm in the stress. My experience as a child of tuning into different states of mind and the subtle pulse of my natural environment gave way to confusion, fear, anger, and withdrawal at school. Those teachers who were gentle, empathic and patient, intuitively knew how to help me overcome my 'learning disabilities' while most made matters worse. I sought out the arts as away to heal myself which eventually led me to meditation and a masters program in contemplative psychotherapy. This program involved
learning how to make friends with intense emotional energy both in myself and in others. Later, studying systems family therapy I learned more about who I was and how I interacted with my world. In thinking about how to develop a contemplative teacher training program these two educational experiences have been paramount in my mind.

What is it that keeps us as adults from experiencing life like a child open to the wonder of the universe and the wonder of being alive? In the chapter Occidental Orientations I explore parallels in religion and humanistic psychology which seem to indicate that we need to clear away a lot of excess conditioning to rediscover the openness we knew as a child. The path toward wisdom according to Wilber (1980) lies beyond ego development in the transpersonal realms of spiritual development which lead us back to the simplicity and wonder of being a child. The Buddhist practice of mindfulness awareness meditation is one simple way to open more fully to one’s experience, to re-awaken wonder, and thereby to cultivate wisdom. The Buddhist perspective, based on the accumulation of experience of many meditators over more than two thousand five hundred years, is one of absolute confidence in the inner wisdom of every person. This wisdom when cultivated with proper training and self discipline is like a light that one can shine both on oneself to sort out unhelpful distortions of emotional energy and upon one’s distorted projections of a seemingly objective and solid reality.

In the next chapter, Sacred Wisdom Roots and the Non-dual Ground, we follow the wisdom road to see that some ancient and sacred cultures have associated wisdom with female deities and principles of receptivity while male principles have to do with penetrating the world of form through action. By examining the experiences of mystics in a variety of cultures we establish that wisdom seems to arise from an experience of oneness when there is no dualistic separation between perceiver and perceived.

In our time it seems that we need not necessarily subscribe to a particular religious view to understand this notion of wisdom as arising out of such an experience of non-dual
perception for the emerging ecological and systems models of life on earth and energy in the universe lead us to the same conclusions. Visions of education formed in a reductionistic, Cartesian-Newtonian universe are clearly no longer appropriate, but giving up our ingrained faith in rationality and linear logic is not an easy task. To let go of ingrained patterns of thought is a task that takes great discipline and a specific kind of training.

How is it that we as the dominant culture of North America have strayed so far from the intuitive wisdom that has always been our birthright? Bateson (1972) tells us that bad ideas propagate themselves in a system like weeds. The Western notion of God the creator as set apart from his creation is such an idea, for in this separation there is a split that has bred itself into every aspect of our culture and daily life. It is the split between sacred and profane, between God and nature, between God and ourselves, between heaven and earth, between body and spirit, and between our emotional energy and our intuitive wisdom. Furthermore the diversity of wisdom styles which in antiquity was felt through the presence of animistic nature spirits or through various pantheons of male and female divinities was lost to a degree in conventional Western monotheism.

In addition to the split between heaven and earth and the loss of God's feminine aspect in conventional western culture, there is also the strangely powerful Christian doctrine of original sin. However it was that this doctrine arose in the church, whether for political reasons or not, it is hard to deny that one consequence of this doctrine has been to sow seeds of deeply personal distrust in oneself (Delumeau, 1990). If we believe that our basic being is sinful by nature and fear the hidden evil assumed to lurk within it is not difficult to understand why we tend to doubt ourselves and tend not to listen to the intuitive voice of elemental energies within our emotions. Likewise any doctrine that advises that we put all of our trust in someone outside ourselves, as the only saviour, also perhaps diminishes our ability to look within to find those subtle cues which guide us to see ourselves and our world clearly.
Finally an almost blind faith in statistics, numbers, and ratios as some kind of transcendent truth tends to disconnect us from working with our bodily feelings to learn what the truth is for us in the very moment that we live it. To some extent the garden variety psychology, as it is often taught to teachers, is overgrown with these weeds (Tart, 1975). For this reason I suggest the contemplative approach as a direct means toward the cultivation of intuitive wisdom.

By reviewing some of the educational psychology that has given rise to learning style theories in the next chapter we see that such theories have proven helpful in broadening the previously narrow scope of education. Yet perhaps the tendency to look toward a strongly scientific and medical type model of diagnosis and treatment has been, in my opinion a disservice to the children, teachers and school communities. By looking at the ‘Learning Styles Profile’ put together by the U.S. National Association of Secondary School Principals (Keefe, 1984, 1985, 1986) we can see that there might be a place for a more intuitive approach to learning styles.

Also in reviewing McCarthy’s (1980) ‘4 MAT’ system I find it to be a fairly comprehensive practical guide to organizing curricula around learning styles. Yet I believe McCarthy’s work also falls short. Her system does not give teachers a way to experience for themselves the different modes and styles directly nor does it give them a way to cultivate confidence in their own intuitive wisdom.

Courses in the psychology of child development are normally regarded as an essential part of teacher training. Yet to what extent are teachers encouraged to look at themselves in relation to their own path of development both as children and as adults? In the two chapters that touch upon the developmental theory of Wilber (1980) I have five interrelated objectives. One is to introduce the reader to a broader sense of development as including transpersonal or contemplative and spiritual aspects. Related to this and harkening back to the mystical experience of oneness as well as the ecological and systems
perspectives is the assertion that our material existence is inseparable from our mental and spiritual being and that development begins, ends, and continuously arises out of what we have established as the mystical experience of oneness, the ground of elemental wisdom.

This second important point is essential if one is to understand notions of how the subtle energies of the five elements play a role in governing the connection between mind/spirit and the material world. Thirdly, the underlying dynamics behind the process of development which Piaget (1964, 1970) develops are stated in experiential terms by Wilber as dissatisfaction, disidentification, transformation, and re-identification at a new level. This structure I will come back to again as the process of death and rebirth. Fourthly, I go into some detail in describing how Wilber has synthesized conventional developmental psychology with Buddhist psychology. In particular, Wilber’s elegant conceptualization of ego development which brings together these two otherwise diverse systems of thought opens the door to explaining why contemplative training in the five elemental wisdoms might be useful for teachers in helping them to know intuitively how a student feels and what they might need in order to learn and grow. Fifthly, I find Wilber’s description of the transitional phase between ego development and transpersonal development to be quite helpful in describing what most adults, including teachers in training, need to do at this stage in order to continue along in their development as a life long journey.

Up to this point I have laid the ground for an exploration into the five elements; water, earth, fire, air, and space or ether as archetypes symbolizing five different qualities to the subtle energy which joins body, mind and environment. If we agree with Berman (1981) that a sense of the sacred has been pressed out of modern culture and therefore lost also in education, then we might ask: ‘Where do we look to re-awaken this sense of the sacred?’

In seven short chapters I review cosmological theories and religious teachings relating to the five elements as a way to begin to evoke this sense of sacredness. The gods
and goddesses of the ancients, though mostly forgotten, are perhaps still with us, hidden deep in the structure of our contemporary myths and in our daily rituals both religious and secular. However, since we have gone through some general developmental phases as a culture (Wilber, 1981), especially the later phases of rigid rationalism, materialism, scientism and individualism, we now find that these gods and goddesses have a different face. As we gradually liberate ourselves from ideology, an over-reliance on the conceptual structures of mind, and shed the clothing of individualism as well as our tendency to cling to dualistic perception we can observe how we are all immersed within many layers of interacting patterns and that we ourselves participate in these patterns by our thoughts, words and deeds. I propose that these patterns tend to organize themselves like the colours of the visual spectrum into groupings that are perhaps in some way similar to Plato’s realm of pure forms and Jung’s notion of archetypes. In this way what were once gods and goddesses might now be understood as patterns and types of energy which in no way diminishes their presence as sacred principles, yet at the same lime accommodates to some extent our need for rational explanations.

Like Jung’s archetypes which are conceived as banks of psychic energy deep within the collective unconscious (Jung 1967, 1968a; Stevens, 1983; Pearson, 1991; Moore & Gillette, 1991) the organizing principles or categories associated with the five elements are a source of energy which can either manifest as positive wisdom or as dysfunctional emotions. Exploring the meaning of each element as an archetypal symbol in cosmology, myth, religion and in the esoteric science and medicine of several world cultures reveals their importance as symbols of transformation, awakening and wisdom. We also see in the conclusion of this set of chapters how the humoural theory of Hippocrates based in ancient elemental theories has been used in Waldorf schools to help teachers cultivate the best in each student and harmonize the diverse energies in a classroom.
In the next chapter, The Mandala of Five Wisdoms in Life and Death, I review the Buddhist teachings concerning the five elemental qualities or Buddha Families as they are called by looking at a traditional text known popularly as The Tibetan Book of the Dead. As this text arranges the wisdom energies in a traditional mandala of female and male deities we come back to the idea presented earlier that wisdom has these two basic aspects; receptive and active, which are as inseparable as a couple in the act of making love.

The particular insight which is poetically revealed in The Tibetan Book of the Dead also brings us back to a familiar refrain in Wilber’s (1980) description of developmental transformation. What Wilber refers to as a process of dissatisfaction, disidentification and re-identification at a new level of awareness becomes in this text dying, death and rebirth. The wisdom of this text is that it explains in great detail the in-between state, what happens between death and birth. This is valuable because this description of the transitional phases is a teaching on how to navigate the process of transformation and growth. In particular, how can we as human beings relax and not panic when intense emotional energy surges up from within as part of the natural trials of passing into a new way of being, a new level of awareness? Emotional energies are a part of learning, growing and developing whether we like it or not. The Tibetan Book of the Dead teaches us that teachers and students can either experience the elemental energies as dull lights of confusion or as the bright lights of elemental wisdom.

In the next five chapters, which make up Part IV, I give an overview of each of the five elemental wisdoms by attempting to evoke their qualities. I also describe how each one manifests psychologically as a distorted emotion and how the same bodily energy can be transmuted into wisdom.

The first chapter of the two part conclusion includes theoretical musing from shamanism to psychotherapy and from contemporary Zen to Greek mythology, all surrounding the relevance of contemplative training in elemental wisdom. The second
concluding chapter describes some of the practical details involved in a possible two year contemplative teacher training program partly organized around a summer retreat to cultivate a direct experience of elemental wisdom.

With this map of the changing countryside and these few words delineating some of the main themes which will act as bridges and border crossings along the elemental wisdom path I trust the reader will have a pleasant journey maintaining just enough sense of orientation to continue with curiosity and excitement.
PART I
Elemental Wisdom
Chapter 1
A Personal Journey Back to the Source

- Garden of the Gods • Rhythm in the stillness • Talking to junipers and magpies • Wiggling at my desk • Flipping b, d, p, q • Patient teachers and teachers with ideas • Acting therapy • An institute of non-judgmental space • The five coloured rooms • Awakening from living dreams • Family systems, outer and inner • Wounded healer • A meeting of minds •

When I was in kindergarten we moved twice. After moving briefly to south Denver we came back to Colorado Springs, where I had been born. There we rented a house in the heart of a spectacularly beautiful area dominated by large red sandstone slabs jutting out of the ground like giant wafers slanted towards Pikes Peak and the other mountains of southern Colorado’s Front Range. This area of tall rock formations, punctuated by ponderosa pines, ancient junipers, yuccas and cactus, was only a few minutes’ walk from the boundaries of a park known as Garden of the Gods, once a sacred place of the Ute Indians. Here, in the summer of my sixth year, before going into grade one, I was allowed to roam alone and free.

Unbeknownst to my parents, I found it easy to climb the slanting sandstone slabs to heights of twenty metres or more, and loved to perch on the rounded ridge-like summits or ledges of these rocks with my feet dangling over the edge. From there I could look out over the trees and other rocks to the mountains and sky beyond. Perched halfway between earth and sky, I experienced a soaring sensation and a deep communion with all that surrounded me. All was still. Then I discovered there was a rhythm to the stillness, a kind of symphony of birds, sky, mountains, rocks and trees. I could feel the cadence of this rhythm within me. Its pulsation seemed to unite me with the natural environment of my surroundings in a joyful and eternal dance.
Out of the rhythm in the stillness I felt a closeness to all that lay within the reach of my senses, and I remember after the stillness passed I would talk to the rocks, the trees, the mountains, and the sky. As I walked the narrow trails between rock formations, I talked to the wild grasses and the dry, sandy stream-beds. I talked, as well, to the ants working around their sandpile communities and to the magpies cawing to me from their perches among the ponderosas. Even the bark of these shapely pines held special meaning in the puzzle-like patterns of its overlapping forms. As well, every scrub oak I passed in my daily walks and runs along the narrow trails had its own quality, character, and secret name.

It was a delight to explore these places alone in my own way, unencumbered by the conceptual frameworks of the adult culture. I experienced a poetic state of mind that joined together the inner world of the imagination and the outer world of perceived phenomena. Researchers tell us from their observations of children that this kind of thinking and awareness is a universal experience of children regardless of what environment they explore. The style of thinking at that age is often referred to as magical because there is no particular distinction between a thing named and the thing itself. By calling or whispering the secret names of rock ledges and dry creek beds, within the context of what might be called a personal ritual system, I remember making a bridge, as it were, between the ineffable world of oneness with nature, and the world of my thoughts and language. This magical bridge had something to do with my experience of distinct rhythms in the stillness. This awareness allowed me to maintain a sense of communion with the natural environment that surrounded me.

Part of my thesis in what is to follow, in the body of this work, is that this integration of primary and secondary process, this 'forgotten language of childhood,' or state of mind similar to it, yet more fully developed, is available to us as adults and teachers. It may seem that the freshness, excitement, and profoundly open quality of a child's perception of the world is buried and forgotten in our busy adult lives. Yet what I attempt to show is that this 'fresh perception of a child' can be reawakened through opening to our experience of
our senses, our inner life, and the subtle rhythm of emotional energies experienced through our bodies. An awareness of our bodies, our minds and our emotional energies can develop into what I refer to in this work as elemental wisdom.

Elemental wisdom is simply maintaining a direct and uncomplicated relationship with our environment. We are linked to our environment by our senses, yet much of the time our senses are perverted by a dualistic style of consciousness and cluttered with preconceptions. Fundamentally we are not separate from our environment. Speaking metaphorically, I could say that our senses as well as our body, mind and communicative emotional system are composed of the same subtle elemental energies or patterns of rhythm as the environment surrounding us. We are linked in an intimate way with all the fluctuations and changes from moment to moment. If we find a certain kind of stillness within ourselves we can gradually learn to read the variations in these subtle elements and claim the wisdom that has always been there, the wisdom that is our birthright. At the same time – and this is fundamental to teaching – we are equally linked to the others who inhabit our environment with us. They share and take part in the same swirling dance of the subtle elements. If we can still our chattering minds, empathy becomes automatic as we find that we are already intimately connected to others around us.

Most of us lose our sensitivity to this elemental wisdom as part of the process of growing up and being conditioned within a culture that doesn’t recognize, emphasize or cultivate such a subtle and non-verbal awareness. I will argue, nonetheless, that it can be reawakened with the proper training. I will come back to this later. For now, I return to my personal story for one example of how this fresh perception of childhood is lost, and then on to my own attempts to gradually reawaken it.

When that summer of exploration and magic ended, I found myself being herded off to school with all the other children my age. The contrast between my free play and discovery among the rocks and trees, my open and intuitive connection with nature, and the rigid claustrophobia of indoor classrooms, desks, blackboards, teachers, and the chaos of
many other children was more than I could tolerate. Angry that my joy of self-directed
discovery had been cut short, disoriented and overwhelmed by the complexity and hectic,
busy quality of new stimuli, I withdrew into a self-made shell. I was angry at having to be
shut up indoors on beautiful days when I could have been climbing rocks and digging in
creek beds. I hated being herded in lines to lunch, to the auditorium and even to the
bathroom. I felt dark and heavy at school. I was paranoid as I sensed that there were
expectations of me, but no one would say what they were.4

I learned to shut out what I could not cope with, reforming the world of the
classroom into a muted and dull experience. I felt misunderstood, betrayed and manipulated
so I closed down and protected myself. I was slower than other children to pick up on the
instructions, slow to figure out what was going on. Always a few beats behind what was
happening, I would lose track and the whole experience of being at school became a
meaningless blur.

The stillness I had experienced alone on the rocks was impossible for me to
recapture in a classroom buzzing with thirty other children. Moving my body was essential
if I was to keep my mind engaged and alert in that chaotic environment. Climbing, running,
jumping, touching and feeling were modes of knowing that worked for me. The classroom
was not set up for learning in these ways and the teacher could not tolerate my constant
movement, so it had to be suppressed. What would later be called my hyperactivity5 seems
now to have been my way of coping with the pressures of an unfamiliar environment,
which at the time seemed to be threatening my way of understanding myself and my world.
Perhaps I was overly sensitive to the emotional tone of the classroom, which was primarily
one of control and domination through subtle intimidation and fear.6

On the other hand, I found that if I was still for very long, within the charged
atmosphere of the classroom, I would become dull and sleepy. Cutting myself off from my
surroundings, I would stare into space with a blank look on my face. Remembering it now,
it seems that if I was not allowed to meet the intensity of the emotional tone of the
classroom. Through constant movement like rocking or fidgeting, I would begin to feel overwhelmed. Then the only way to deal with the intense current of feelings was to selectively tune out most of what was going on around me by some internal means that I now recall as being a kind of foggy confusion, a state of mind with which I am still familiar to this day.

As the years went on I was labelled as a hyperactive child and was given a dosage of Ritalin to slow me down; while my sleepy dull states were labelled as petit mal seizures, and I was given Dylantin for those. These chemical solutions never worked very well for me, and because I made such a fuss every morning before taking the pills, my parents decided after a year and a half that it was not worth the trouble.

When visual symbols representing speech were presented in grade one I didn’t pay much attention. Up until that time I had learned from the spoken word. I didn’t see the need for all those strange, squiggly lines which tended to blur together and randomly changed direction on me, flipping back and forth from b to d, p to q, etc. At the time I was not aware of these specific learning problems, as such, because I had no basis for comparison in my experience. (Later I would learn that these problems had names like ‘dyslexia’ and ‘learning disabilities.’) All I knew at that time was that it was difficult to focus on those little squiggly lines, and that trying to made me angry!

Sitting in a tight little desk, trying to keep still, while also trying to focus on those little black marks that would blur, flip and slide all over the page generated more frustration than I could tolerate. The more I tried to look at them and decipher them, the more frustrated and angry I became. I felt like a volcano about to blow my top. The worst part was that I had no desire to read. I was more interested in real things that I could see and touch. I wanted to build things. I wanted to listen to someone who could teach me from their own experience. I wanted to hear some good stories.

Nevertheless, abstract visual symbols seemed to be the most important thing in the world to my teachers and parents, and everyone started to worry when I didn’t pick up the knack of reading as easily as most others did. I remember in grade two being given one of
those faded blue mimeographed pieces of paper with one side covered with tiny faded letters. My response was to turn the page over to the blank side and draw a picture of mountains and sky on it, completely ignoring the meaningless symbols on the other side. With this scenario a warning call went out to my parents, and this gave way to a chain reaction of endless batteries of tests, educational strategies, therapies, conceptual labels and stigmas. I was labelled dyslexic, hyperactive, learning disabled, minimally brain dysfunctioned, socially inappropriate, psychologically disturbed, stupid, dumb, retarded, slow, exceptional and bright.

That year, in grade two, I was pulled out of class and put through a lot of testing. The testing itself was fun and challenging, particularly because I had the full attention of the person administering the tests, and she patiently explained everything until I knew what was expected of me. The end result seemed to indicate (as I found out mostly through eavesdropping on my parents and teachers) that I was intelligent, but that I seemed to have several significant learning problems.

I found that teachers would fit into either of two categories. There were calm teachers who noticed my strengths and weaknesses in an intuitive way, and I knew that they would be my allies. They were able to patiently train me in areas where I was deficient, seeming to have no trouble with my slowness. At the same time they would draw on my verbal and other strengths to devise educational activities in which my unique abilities could shine. These teachers were few and far between.

The majority of the teachers I experienced seemed to maintain their ideas about how and at what pace children should learn. I, for one, did not follow their lesson plan. I wanted to come up with my own way of doing things, and I always needed more time than was allotted to finish assignments. Time and time again I felt pressured by the teachers to conform to the accepted normal ways and time restrictions. I would try to do it their way, become thoroughly confused, frustrated and angry, act out in defiance of the teacher and wind up in the principal's office. Looking back, this scenario seems to have repeated itself.
over and over during the first eight or nine years of my education. It seems to me that many learning and behavioural problems could have been avoided if my teachers had taken an interest, first, in learning from me how I learned and at what pace.

After leaving elementary school I began to put more energy into the physical discipline of sports. This helped me to synchronize my mind with my body and provided a way to work with bound-up emotional energy. Meanwhile, some of the exceptional teachers mentioned earlier began to steer me in the direction of acting and theatre exercises. This proved to be a refreshing new way to relate with emotional energies, and it awakened in me a different kind of intelligence and sensibility. Looking back, I see that theatre became a passion for me partly because it was the only place where I was encouraged to feel and express my emotions. Acting in plays, I could escape the rigid right-and-wrong style of thinking that seemed to dominate the rest of my school experience and enter a colourful world where I could explore different ways of being.

I experienced a kind of healing by working with the various theatre disciplines. Through movement, dance, mime, voice, memorization, character development and interpretative skills I was trained to respect my internal experience and increase my awareness of my body, my speech, and my mind. In this way, some of my difficulties with learning were naturally resolved. The experience of learning how to relax into stage fright, the heightened sense of being watched and somehow developing an internal watcher, as well as exploring once again that inner stillness as a way to project a stage presence were all powerful lessons. These lessons, though easily forgotten during times of stress in my life, would become for me like an underground stream that would bubble up to the surface again and again along my journey. My enjoyment of acting and theatre seemed much more therapeutic than any other remedial work or educational strategy that I had been subjected to in my primary education.

Through high school and college I spent much of my time acting, and then embarked on an intensive one-year actor training program in London, England. It was
through acting that I discovered the power of emotions to provoke personal insight and transformation. During improvisation classes, characters like a Vietnam war veteran from the southern United States suffering from post-traumatic stress, or an English nobleman obsessed with gardening and cloud shapes, would arise within me, teaching me that I had observed and recorded much more detail than I had thought possible. The discipline of pretending to be someone else had a liberating effect on me.  

The discipline of carefully observing how my inner experience of thoughts and feelings manifested in my body and speech as the instruments of expression awakened in me a spiritual yearning. By this I mean that I glimpsed, while acting, a feeling of what it is to be whole, to be fully integrated and synchronized, and I yearned to expand that glimpse into my daily life.

Memorizing lines from Shakespeare, T. S. Eliot, Williams and other dramatic literature, I began to appreciate a good turn of phrase, particularly the way the words would feel in my mouth as I spoke them. The elegance of their rhythm would resonate in my body. I discovered that the rhythm and sounds of words could reawaken in me the sensitivity I had experienced while sitting high on the sandstone slabs back home in Colorado. Through solitude and a quiet respectful listening, I found there were times when my internal rhythm and the rhythm of external circumstances would join, and from this experience I began to play at writing poetry. I also kept a journal and experimented with automatic writing. I had always maintained a mild fear of reading based in my early negative experiences of learning to read and therefore had not studied literature at university. After finishing my year at acting school, however, poetry became my great passion. I attempted to pursue poetry primarily from listening to tapes and live readings, as I found it very difficult to find meaning or to bring poetry to life off the page by myself.

These two interests — poetry and spirituality — eventually brought me in 1980 to the Naropa Institute in Boulder, Colorado, to study poetry with Alan Ginsburg, as well as other Beat Generation and contemporary poets. At Naropa there was a distinct atmosphere
of openness and discovery. It was as if the teachers there had separated themselves from the pressures of the typical North American preoccupation with goal orientation and rushing to accomplish something. Instead, the faculty and students seemed to cultivate an acute awareness and appreciation for the process of learning itself and the ever-changing qualities of moment-to-moment experience.\(^\text{16}\) For example, in a dance class we would spend an hour and a half in a silent, structured improvisation and then a half hour sharing our internal experiences with one another. This atmosphere was set in motion by the founder of Naropa Institute, Chögyam Trungpa, a Tibetan Buddhist meditation master. I would also learn that the emphasis on process was kept alive within the community of the Institute through the practice of meditation.\(^\text{17}\)

As an American raised to value 'independent thinking' and 'freedom' above all else, soaked in the various myths of the American independent spirit of Puritan refugees, colonial rebels, valiant explorers, pioneers, cowboys and even the white man's version of the noble savage, visionary shaman or native medicine man, I was suspicious of anything that seemed vaguely like a cult or an organized religion. As an aspiring poet, I took people like Whitman and Thoreau as models for how I might proceed as a fiercely independent seeker of truth. I was uneasy with the idea of being a follower rather than a trail blazer.

Despite my strong aversion and scepticism, I found that the atmosphere of non-judgemental openness and flourishing creative energy at Naropa made a strong impression on me. By attempting to critically observe the community of faculty and students, I perceived in them a level of insight and emotional sensitivity that I had not known before. Yet, in another way, this contemplative culture seemed as familiar to me as the rhythms of my own mind. The topics of conversation and the language people used seemed to me to come out of that place of stillness that I vaguely remembered from childhood, and expressed a unique sensitivity to the ebb and flow of mental states. While in the presence of some of these people I felt acutely aware of my own anxiety, pressured by thoughts and unable to relax. It was as if their sense of calm acted like a mirror that reflected back to me
my own agitation and discomfort. After maintaining a noncommittal distance to critically examine what I found at Naropa, I decided to request an interview to receive meditation instruction.

I had taken some comparative religion courses in college, as well as Chinese philosophy, and had read a lot about Zen meditation both from the Chinese and Japanese perspectives. I had tried to meditate based on what I had read in books, but this did not work for me. When I first received personal instruction from someone who knew about the experience of meditation, something more than the words was transmitted. It was as if I had been shown how to dig a well to reach that underground stream, and the memory of the rhythm of stillness was reawakened in me. Instead of having to wait for those chance occurrences when I would come across a bubbling spring on my journey, now I could learn to reach into the subterranean source of stillness through my own efforts. Applying the meditation technique felt to me like coming home to rest after a long journey away.

I found the practice of meditation compelling. It seemed to me to be the underlying discipline of all disciplines. It satisfied a deep need that I had always felt, the need to explore my own mind and my own experience directly, to gradually clear away the outside influences and seek for myself my own wisdom from within. To do this I found that I needed first to tame the wildness of my mind. Observing my mind, I was shocked to see how much I was buffeted by contradictory thought patterns and internal emotional conflicts. Sitting quietly with myself, trying to be present, sometimes seemed like watching the drama of O'Neill's 'Long Day's Journey Into Night' (O'Neill, 1988) being played out within me.

As I continued with meditation, I slowed down and learned to appreciate the simple experiences of everyday life. This slowing down allowed me to be more honest with myself, and I opened up to deeper levels of my own confusion as well as opening to that of others. In the midst of all of this confusion I also noticed an undercurrent of unshakable
sanity. Like the sandstone perches of my childhood and the sky above this sanity was natural and ordinary.

I realized paradoxically that, although I had been searching for those elusive and rare experiences when the underground spring bubbled up, I had been, at the same time, blind to those springs of stillness and simplicity that could occur naturally in my life. A deep fear of inactivity fueled my anxiety and kept me searching in external events for those elusive experiences of insight and joy that could not be found there. I was driven by the pressures from outside myself, from my family and culture. The drive for success was all-important, whether it was to be successful in the eyes of others, to compete against others, to win the love of others or simply to devour more and more experiences of excitement and entertainment. I mistakenly believed that what I was searching for lay outside myself.

I gradually began to realize that these were all distractions and that this drive for excitement was nothing more than a way of running away from myself, which only created further neurotic confusion. I realized there was enough confusion in the world and that I didn’t want to add to it. At this time I felt inspired to go further in learning how to work with my own confusion as well as learning how to work with the confusion and psychological pain of others. For these reasons, the experience of meditation led me to enroll in the Naropa Institute Masters Program in Contemplative Psychotherapy.

What intrigued me most about the program was a three month contemplative group retreat in the Colorado Rockies called the Maitri Space Awareness Program. I had been working with a small theatre group in the evenings while studying poetry at Naropa. As part of this group I had been introduced to the five wisdom principles of maitri space awareness practice. Each of the five wisdom principles had been represented by a large swatch of brightly coloured material laid on the studio floor and we were asked to move from one colour to the next and embody the emotional tone of each colour in turn.

I spoke to people who had done the full retreat. From what I could gather, this retreat had a powerful healing effect on those who had participated. All I knew was that the
participants and faculty formed a therapeutic community for one another and that the specific meditation practice involved coloured rooms that allowed people to experience their emotions in an intensified manner. I learned that the Sanskrit word *maitri* meant loving kindness and related specifically with developing loving kindness towards oneself. I imagined that this therapeutic community retreat would be a safe place for me to face my fear of going insane. Also, I imagined that it might serve as an ideal non-judgemental environment in which to heal myself by learning to accept, and even appreciate, my most intense emotions.

The Maitri Space Awareness retreat is designed to train therapists to work with intensified states of mind of five different emotional styles or personality types of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. This system delineates five styles of intuitive wisdom or personality type and has been developed and refined for over a thousand years (Trungpa, 1973, 1976; Chögyam, 1986; Snelgrove, 1987). In this system, five general patterns of emotional energy called 'buddha families' are associated with colours, parts of the body, ways of thinking and perceiving, phases of psychological development, personality styles and the five elements of earth, water, fire, air and space. Each of these patterns of energy can be experienced in a confused or neurotic manner, or they can be experienced from a mature perspective which I call the five elemental wisdoms.

In 1970 Chögyam Trungpa, a Tibetan meditation master, and Shunryu Suzuki, a Japanese Zen Master, two of the first genuine Buddhist teachers to introduce their respective traditions to North American students (Fields, 1984) met together and shared ideas about how to adapt the practice of meditation in a way which would convey the essence of the experience to Westerners who were not able to sit cross-legged for many hours, day after day. What they came up with at that time was a set of five rooms, each of a different colour, with different sizes and shapes of windows. One room is blue with a few crystalline-blue slits for windows, another yellow with golden light pouring in from two large round sun-like windows, another intensely red illuminated by two softly glowing red
rectangular windows, another bright green with green light radiating from one small window at the top of a steeply sloping four-sided pyramidal ceiling, and finally, there is a nondescript square room of basic flat white, awash with a muted and indirect white light.

By taking a specific posture in each room and engaging in the simple practice of 'being there' the participant works to remain open and alert, allowing for an interaction to occur between one's body/mind and the environment. By practicing for two fifty-minute sessions a day in one of these rooms, for a week or more, one's awareness is intensified within one of the five elemental styles, and one can learn things about oneself as one interacts with others in the community outside the room. These emotional states, normally obscured from one's awareness of oneself, are heightened to the point where one cannot avoid experiencing both the 'neurotic' and the 'wisdom' aspects.

After experiencing the five styles as isolated and intensified experiences, one develops an ability to discriminate the more subtle aspects of how each style is formed, and one discovers a deeper appreciation of the underlying qualities. My class began this retreat in early April of 1981 after spending the winter in classes studying psychopathology, the psychology of meditation and the psychology of dreams.

I remember driving up to the mountain retreat centre after a heavy snowfall. The road was not plowed and we had to walk the last mile, which seemed at the time an appropriate way to enter this rugged landscape that I sensed would soon become the backdrop for an exploration of my own uncharted internal landscape.

I began this exploration lying on my back with my arms and legs spread wide open, in the yellow room, one large, sun-like window, just in view, on the wall above me at my feet and another over my head. Like most of the others in my class I was sceptical that just by doing this for fifty minutes twice a day I would find any real change in my experience. After a few days, though, I noticed a subtle sense of warmth, simplicity and relaxation. I felt happy to be in the mountains and I took hikes through the snow to craggy rocks to see
higher peaks in the distance. I wrote a lot of poems; I felt well taken care of, well fed and surrounded by caring people.

However, as I continued taking my posture in the yellow room twice a day this state of mind was gradually interrupted by feelings of inadequacy: ‘maybe I am missing the point of this retreat, maybe I am not sensitive enough to learn anything from this.’ I wanted more experience. I felt that I was too stupid to understand what was happening, and I wanted someone to take me by the hand to show me and reassure me. There seemed to be no one there to fill this need for me, which made me yearn for it all the more. I felt needy and unfulfilled. As this experience intensified, I isolated myself from others, embarrassed that I was not worthy or clever enough to know what was happening. I felt lonely, dejected, hungry and cold. I couldn’t get enough to eat and my digestion stopped working properly, leaving me bloated and uncomfortable but still hungry. The interesting thing was that through all of this I could see what I was doing to create this state of mind. Every now and then it would clear, briefly giving me a strong sense of contrast between the claustrophobic, neurotic, self-involved state of mind and the simple sanity of feeling the earth beneath my feet. The experience was familiar to me as my own way of getting caught up, but it was overwhelming at the time. The colour of my needy and self-pitying thoughts surrounded me, and it is only with hindsight that I can say that I learned anything by going through such a painful experience.

My experience of how I was affected by the other four rooms followed a similar pattern, yet each was different in the qualities of moodiness and excitement. While practicing in the red room I alternated between feeling sleepy and dopey, entertaining dreams and fantasies of epic proportions on the one hand and a kind of agitated state of unrequited romantic love on the other. I became infatuated with a girl in my class and pursued her in my shy and unappealing manner. This culminated in an intensely awkward and unresolvable encounter in her car. We talked through the night till dawn broke over the snowy ridge.
While practicing in the green room I found myself possessed with boundless energy and a desire to engage myself with everyone in the community all the time. I was lightheaded and needed less sleep and involved myself in multiple activities. As time went on, however, I also rediscovered a mean streak that I had not experienced since junior high school. In talking with people I found myself enjoying a cruel sense of humour designed to put them down and make me look good. It would slip out against my will and better judgement. I would feel remorse, but I also noticed that a part of me felt very clever and thrilled by the swift repartee. Eventually, this state of mind intensified into paranoia where I couldn’t trust others and, most importantly, I couldn’t trust myself. I never knew when I might say something in an underhanded way to hurt someone or what sort of nasty trick I might pull next. Looking back, I can see that through all of this there was a part of my awareness, trained in meditation practice, that could watch the entire process unfold and could learn from my experience.

While practicing in the blue room I initially enjoyed a sense of simplicity and clear thinking that was unfamiliar to me. Even what I could see with my eyes seemed more precise and detailed. This soon gave way to a feeling of being oppressed by the intensity of this heightened perception of detail. The sense of pressure coming from the outside world eventually gave way to an intensely annoying physical sensation of pressure on my chest, and a frightening feeling that my chest could not expand enough to breathe.

When I experienced this shortness of breath I would reassure myself that it was only my mind and gently focus awareness on my breathing, in and out, in and out, carefully and gently; I found that all was well with my lungs and that I only needed to pay attention to assure myself of this. The physical sense of pressure seemed to come from my incredible sensitivity and irritation with imperfections in my environment. The smallest things like sitting too close to someone or being in too tight a space caused a feeling of claustrophobia that could quickly escalate, bringing shortness of breath. The only way that I could overcome this sense of claustrophobia, feeling that all my perceptions of the world
were pressing in on me, was to push the world away with an equal force of anger, as a means of self defense. Not being accustomed to dealing with my anger, I found myself imploding it toward myself instead of directing it outward. This caused me mild depression, and again I withdrew from others to hide behind a frozen armour of defensiveness.

While doing my two sessions a day in the white room, I experienced what was probably the most profound sense of simplicity and open psychological space. One morning after leaving the room nothing was happening in my mind. That is to say, there were no thoughts extraneous to the present moment distracting me from being fully present with what I was doing. While I put on my shoes and tied them I was simply aware of my actions and the space around me in the room. There was no little voice in my head, none at all. I had overstayed my time, and the others who had been practicing had already left. I was totally alone, which helped me to maintain this simple awareness. Although we were instructed to remain silent upon leaving the rooms together, to help foster this kind of awareness, I often found that the presence of others around me had the effect of shrinking my awareness into self-consciousness. On this day, however, as I walked up the trail in solitude and calm back to the main building to have lunch I noticed how I moved through the space and, as I walked, I noticed how the trees seemed to pass by me as I moved forward.

Such a simple thing as this, which I normally would miss as my mind oscillates quickly back and forth between inner thoughts and a merely perfunctory awareness of where I am going, generated in me a sense of awe and wonder. I stepped out of the woods into a small meadow, and this feeling intensified as my awareness expanded into the open space all around me. My sense of body and my walking became only a small fraction of what was happening, as I felt that my mind was alive in the space all around me. It was somewhat as if I was watching myself from above or all around, yet not exactly, because at the same time I was fully present in my body, feeling my footsteps, breathing each breath, and seeing out through my eyes. It was as if my body and its activity of walking, seeing,
hearing and sensing was suspended in a bigger mind which had no limit. What I experienced as my mind was somehow not separate from this bigger mind.

After a short while, the small trail came up through the meadow to a dirt road, and I remember how pleased I was with finally having an experience that seemed to confirm that all this meditation practice was worthwhile. ‘It is paying off,’ I thought. This thought disturbed my awareness ever so slightly and it gradually began to diminish despite my attempts to maintain it. Then I saw, a little way up the road, a person coming towards me. He was a friend of mine, and as I approached him more and more thoughts began to bounce around inside my brain and my sense of the space around me came crashing in upon me, almost like a violent kind of implosion, until at the point when we met on the road I was right back at what I considered my normal, everyday sense of being.

As I continued to practice in the white room I had a few more glimpses of this kind of experience. When I wasn’t having one of these experiences I was, for the most part, falling into a kind of dull and sleepy stupor, so totally absorbed in my own thoughts and dullness that I could not perform even the simplest task without losing track of what I was doing. I constantly misplaced things or forgot to take things with me when I left in the morning. Upon discovering that I had forgotten something, like my notebook, I would have to walk back up the trail a half mile or so to the cabin to get it. Upon arriving there my mind would be so filled with the thoughts that entertained me on my walk that I would not recall my reason for coming back. Most of my day seemed to be spent making up for lost time, that is, time when I was not present enough to maintain an awareness of what I was doing.

Each person experienced different effects from practicing in the coloured rooms, and we compared notes to try to sharpen our awareness of what was happening. For the most part, however, we were all too close to the lessons we were learning to make any immediate evaluation. The real awakening occurred when we left the retreat and began our clinical internships in various branches of the mental health field. I did my internship in a
psychiatric halfway house known by mental health professionals as the revolving door between the street and the psychiatric hospital.

Up until that time I had never been exposed to people who carried the burden of clinical diagnosis such as schizophrenia, bipolar manic depressive disorder and borderline personality disorder. For two and a half days a week I would manage the cases and talk with those clients who were assigned to me. I found them to be, for the most part, intelligent and interesting people with a tremendous amount of personal integrity. Yet they were swallowed up in the turbulent energy of their unresolved emotions, which fueled distorted thoughts to the point where their perceptual reality was distorted. Their denied emotional experiences became the external threats perceived in their paranoid delusions.19

I felt their pain and sensed that I could begin to glimpse an understanding of their struggle and personal predicament. Though my own experiences of distorted realities on the retreat were not psychotic in their intensity, it was easy to see a continuity between my clients' experience and my own. The process of projecting a distorted reality, believing in it, and getting lost in it was the same.

Like a dreamer immersed in the dream, I knew these distorted realities could seem very solid and unquestionably 'real.' I also knew that it was possible to wake from the dream, even if only for an instant, and that these instants of waking could be repeated over and over. My experience of the retreat gave me the sensitivity and empathy to join with my clients in their pain, as well as the confidence to help guide them through it.

My classmates also found that having experienced intensified emotional energies and slightly distorted states of mind, in the context of interpersonal relationships during the retreat, had better prepared them to work with clients in the mental health field. In our discussions after classes, in cafés and pubs, or in cars driving to and from our clinical internships, we unanimously agreed that by opening to deeper levels of emotional awareness within ourselves we felt more able to experience accurate empathic resonance with our clients.
While working as beginning therapists in clinical internships we also continued in our studies and contemplative self-awareness practices with psychology courses, group psychotherapy, on-going meditation practice and clinical supervision.

The group psychotherapy sessions were led by experienced clinicians trained in a variety of group psychotherapeutic disciplines ranging from the formlessness of the Tavistock process to the more structured Gestalt techniques. In these intimate therapy groups my fellow students and I were encouraged to share with one another our inner struggles and challenges during all phases of the program from the beginning term of class work through the maitri space awareness retreat, the clinical internship, and the final term of thesis writing.

Clinical supervision involved presenting the clinical work from our internships to two experienced clinicians. This occurred in small groups of three students and two supervisors meeting once a week. We were instructed in a very detailed manner of case presentation designed to reveal hidden aspects of the client, our relationship with the client, and most importantly ourselves (Rabin & Walker, 1987). I remember time and time again feeling exposed within the supervision group when my blind spots and unconscious habitual tendencies were gently pointed out.

The final phase of the Naropa Contemplative Psychotherapy program involved writing up a case presentation together with theoretical material as a Master's thesis. The small supervision groups also served as intimate advisory committees to facilitate in the research and writing process.

Altogether, I found that the curriculum at Naropa Institute was designed to join together academic study and ongoing personal development. I found that by keeping a daily discipline of meditation practice for the entire two and a half year period, my awareness of myself and my environment was heightened. This helped me to intensify and internalize the overall learning experience.
After graduating from the program, and while working in the mental health field, I returned twice to participate in the maitri space awareness retreat as part of the teaching staff. I felt then, as I do now, that the maitri space awareness practice could be a valuable method for training teachers.

The maitri space awareness practice might help teachers to contact the five styles of awareness within their own experience and so give them superior ability to empathize with their students and thereby intuitively feel and know what students need to enhance their growth and learning. Bringing teachers and educators into contact with this powerful learning experience is the main inspiration for this work. In addition, I feel that many other insights gained in my training and professional development as a clinical psychologist are not only appropriate for teachers and educators, but very much needed as part of teacher training.

In order to gain personal insight into the process of mind itself, and to apply that insight in clinical practice as well as in everyday life, I have found no better tool than the daily practice of meditation. Meditation fostered a heightened awareness of internal experience, thoughts and emotions, which gradually gave me the ability to observe how my internal experience shapes my experience of the world.

In the Buddhist tradition, study is regarded as only one half of a full educational experience. In the Tibetan Buddhist tradition it is said that study and meditation practice complement each other like the two wings of a bird. It is my belief that the integration of contemplative awareness techniques and meditation practice into teacher education could profoundly improve the teacher’s ability to guide students onto their own life-long journeys of learning.

If meditation practice is, in fact, a valuable tool for training teachers there is still the significant problem of bridging the cultural gap so that young people training to be teachers may come to understand why it is of value and yearn to practice it. Before teachers in training could benefit from a program that introduces them to the deeply personal aware-
ness of elemental wisdom energies, they would need to follow a curriculum that would train them in certain specific concepts and theories from a number of contemporary schools of psychotherapy. In particular, I believe that a brief introduction to some of the concepts and working theories of family systems therapy, as well as the theory of archetypes in Jungian psychology, would prepare teachers in training to explore themselves with critical intelligence. The cultural gap between our North American scientifically-oriented academic institutions and the Eastern approach utilizing meditation could, I believe, be bridged by such a curriculum.

To my mind, the ideal place to begin to introduce teachers in training to the idea of examining themselves as part of their personal and professional development as a teacher begins with an examination of who they are as a product of their family of origin. The curriculum I envision would teach them not only the concepts of family systems therapy but also guide them through an experience of applying these principles to themselves and their fellow students within the classroom community of teachers in training. Likewise, an introduction to the concept of Jungian archetypal psychology would be done in an introspective way that would encourage teachers in training to examine themselves as well as their classmates. The Jungian archetypal psychology in its cross-cultural emphasis could serve to prepare teachers in training for the contemplative approach of Buddhist psychology.

As to my own journey, I decided, after working in the mental health field for a few years and continuing to serve on the staff of the Maitri Space Awareness Retreat Programs, that I needed to add to my training some more in-depth and practical training in Western psychology. I chose to study family systems therapy through a Certificate Program in Family Systems Therapy at the Kantor Family Institute in Sommerville, Massachusetts. Designed to train professional therapists and social workers in family therapy, this program, like the Naropa program, demanded and fostered intensive personal development as part of that training.
It is widely accepted within the field of family therapy that a therapist’s ability to alter dysfunctional family structures and help individuals and families in their development is directly related to his or her own degree of individuation and freedom from disabling behavioural structures held over from his or her own family of origin (Bowen, 1978; Framo, 1972; Madanes, 1981; Minuchin & Fishman, 1981; Napier & Whitiker, 1978).

Aside from the academic study of the theories and techniques of family therapy, the core of the Kantor Institute program was to carefully analyze oneself as a product of one’s family of origin in order to become more fully aware of one’s strengths and weaknesses as a family therapist, and ultimately to turn one’s weaknesses into one’s strengths.

While studying family therapy I was working with troubled adolescent boys and their families in a south Boston junior high school. While doing this work I became more and more painfully aware of my own personal confusion that was a result of the rôles I had played in my family of origin, rôles I played in response to my mother’s drinking and unpredictable behaviour. Very slowly I began to identify myself as an ‘adult child of an alcoholic’ and, as best as I could at the time, began to read some of the books on this topic that were just beginning to come out. Most of the boys I worked with also came from families where one or both of their parents were alcoholics or drug addicts. This situation forced me to look again at myself and begin to heal myself if I wished to offer any help to the boys and families I was attempting to serve.

For example, I worked with one boy who had a reputation for skipping school and getting into fights. His father had been in prison but was due back within a few months of our first getting together. One day his mother came into our afternoon interview drunk. I told her we could not continue that session, and she left. In our next interview I found myself provoking her into a defensive rage. In going back over the session with my supervisor I became aware of the unresolved anger that I felt with my own mother and how I acted it out with this woman in a passive-aggressive style, trying to make her feel guilty.
I was fortunate enough to have a very astute supervisor assigned by the Kantor Institute. Gradually, she and I began to chart on a special graph called a boundary profile, devised by David Kantor, the founder of the Institute, some of my more basic tendencies arising from the roles I had played in my family of origin. From a psychoanalytic point of view, this chart might be described as a tool to prevent the danger of counter-transference in the healing relationship. The psychosynthesis school of therapy originating in the work of the Italian psychiatrist Roberto Assagioli uses a similar technique of mapping sub-personalities as a means toward self-awareness and personal growth (Assagioli, 1983; Rowan, 1990). Whatever one calls it, this work of humbly acknowledging who one is and how one tends to act as a result of one's family background is a powerful tool for heightening one's awareness of oneself. I believe that teachers in their training could utilize such techniques to first acknowledge limitations in their personalities and then to gradually overcome them.

In the final phase of the training at the Kantor Institute I was asked to move on from the experience of coming to grips with my boundary profile into the work of developing my own personal style as a family therapist. The thrust in this final phase for me was to develop confidence by assimilating all that I had learned. Going back over the divergent theories and techniques of family therapy that I had studied, knowing them more intimately through trial and error in clinical experience, I began to choose from these various styles of family therapy those that best reflected my own style. The lessons I had learned from working with my boundary profile were incorporated into this choice, and the final phase was to draw upon the diverse techniques and styles to create my own individual therapeutic style that worked for me. I believe it would be useful for teachers to go through a similar process so they can develop their own personal style of teaching that works for them.21

I have presented a portion of my experience with these two training programs in clinical psychology, the Naropa Institute's M.A. Program in Contemplative Psychotherapy and the Certificate Program in Family Therapy at the Kantor Family Institute, because they
both combined academic studies with rigorously structured programs for developing self-awareness and personal development. I think that teachers would be well served by a similar training program designed to help them observe themselves and thereby develop a highly personal style of teaching that is sensitive to the individual needs of students as well as the emotional challenges present within the social environment of learning.

When I left the red rocks, ponderosas and sandy dry creek beds in the fall of my sixth year to go to school I lost more than just my innocence. I lost my sense of wonder and confidence in my intuitive ability to pick up on the cues in my environment. I lost my trust in myself and my ability to rest in the rhythm of stillness which connected me to all that surrounded me. I also gained. Gradually I gained the skills that enable me to write these pages now. I gained the skills that enable me to read the thoughts of people I will never meet, and pursue the pleasures of higher education. However, it is my conviction that I didn’t have to give up on my intuition in order to cultivate my intellect.

Because most of the teachers I encountered had been fooled into losing trust in themselves and their own intuition long before I met them, they blindly indoctrinated me in the same system. If they could not trust their own inner wisdom, how could they ever have encouraged me to trust mine? The journey I have taken to begin to regain my sense of trust in my perceptions and inner wisdom has not been an easy one. It is a humbling journey of constantly admitting what I don’t know and constantly expanding what negativity I am willing to see in myself. I find that I am not always pleased with what I see. Yet by facing it honestly and with compassion, I heal myself and move on to see more and more. As I heal myself by opening to the elemental energies of my emotions, I am more able to open to the power of these energies in others and to encourage them along on their own journeys of healing.

These slices from my own educational journey reveal my personal biases concerning what I feel is generally lacking in teacher training and how I believe this might be remedied. In presenting what is to follow I have no interest in assuming a stance of
pseudo-scientific objectivity. On the contrary, the insights and deeply held convictions derived from my subjective experience form the heart of what I write, and I hope that by making these clear to the reader at the beginning, there will be no misunderstanding.

... Science has been affected by a point of view which tries to be value-free. This is of course mere prejudice.

David Bohm (1980, pp. 174-175)

My primary bias has to do with my personal experience of 'learning disabilities' and being a difficult student. In my experience, those teachers who were comfortable with themselves were not threatened by me and were able to teach me. This experience has impelled me to work toward developing teacher training that facilitates self-knowledge and the cultivation of intuitive wisdom.

Joan Halifax, an anthropologist studying shamanism, has brought attention to the archetype of the 'wounded healer' (Halifax, 1979). Many of us suffer some degree of emotional wounding as children in our families of origin and as a result of the process of socialization and cultural conditioning (Miller, 1984). The process by which we acknowledge and incorporate our wounds into our lives from one breath to the next, opening to the teaching power inherent in the wound itself, constitutes the journey of healing and awakening personal wisdom. By accepting our woundedness, we become more sensitive to the wounds of others, and by healing ourselves we free up vast resources of energy to work toward helping others to heal themselves.

The wounds I experienced as a child, being mocked and laughed at for being slow, for having to take 'brain pills' and for having to go to special remedial and therapeutic sessions, are still with me. However, it is my experience that the residual feelings of insecurity, fear and resentment are gradually being transformed into a heightened sensitivity and firm resolve to work toward preventing other children from having to experience the same thing. Though I feel that I have been only partially able to achieve this transformation
and do not in any way claim to be an expert at it, I nevertheless feel compelled to offer what
I do know about the transformative process of the wounded healer to others, and especially
to potential teachers, who may benefit from merely hearing about it as a possibility or,
 better yet, by engaging it as a learning process.

There are many different ways to facilitate a healing process and many different
 ways to train teachers to heighten their innate intuitive awareness. My own experience of
 healing has led me to work with two of these ways, which I have come to see as comple­
 mentary. One is through psychotherapy and the family systems approach, which identifies
 any rigid roles inappropriately still being played out in life as a result of dysfunctional
 communication and relationship patterns in one’s family of origin. The second is the path
 of meditation and contemplative practice involving the five elemental wisdoms of Buddhist
 psychology. There exists a significant body of literature examining the underlying philo­
 sophy and practice of family systems and family therapy (Ackerman, 1966a, b; Bowen,
 1978; Haley, 1980; Madanes, 1981; Minuchen, 1974; Minuchin & Fishman, 1981; Napier
 & Whitiker, 1978; Satir, 1972). However, there is very little current literature that looks at
 the philosophical and psychological issues underlying the use of meditation and
 contemplative methods to heighten awareness of the five elemental wisdoms in an
 educational setting.

Aside from my personal experience I write, like anyone else, from a specific
 cultural context and from the context of my training. Being an American writing in Canada
 I am immersed within the general North American culture; however, more significantly,
 since 1980 I have been a student of Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhism as it has been introduced
 into North America by the late Chögyam Trungpa (1939-1987). The experience of
 meditation and the experience of making a personal connection with a teacher of a wisdom
 lineage is not something that is openly acknowledged or particularly encouraged in our
 North American cultural heritage.
In the West, and particularly within academic circles, there is a scepticism, partly healthy and partly xenophobic, with regard to what it means to be a follower of a meditation master or ‘guru.’ The negative attitudes about the nature of such a relationship seem to be centred on notions of dependency versus autonomy. Autonomy and free thinking are values esteemed in North America, where ideas of rugged individualism and intellectual independence are what we seem to regard as freedom. Ironically, in Tibetan Buddhism it is one’s relationship with the teacher, the guru, that puts one face-to-face with the depths of one’s existential aloneness and the consequential freedom derived from that realization.

The close association between student and master in the Tibetan tradition is described as a meeting of minds. Trungpa describes this meeting of minds in very simple, concrete terms as what happens when both teacher and student create a situation of open communication. “It is a matter of being what you really are and of relating to the spiritual friend as he or she is.” The ego is tenacious, and there is no end to the trickery and deception it can play if one sincerely embarks upon a path of transformation. What is needed is a person to play the part of a mirror. By engendering respect and yearning for the wisdom and compassion of the master, one is able to step beyond the games of ego and discover the teacher within. In the Tibetan tradition the outer guru is known as the guru of example, while the ultimate guru is the teacher within or one’s own wisdom mind. The meeting of minds is, in fact, a vivid experience of the Buddhist teaching of no self, as well as the Buddhist view that from the ultimate perspective the mind of the teacher and the student are already one.

Ideally, the relationship between teacher and student should always come from this deep sense of communion or ultimate oneness. This is only possible to the extent that the teacher is open to the mind and heart of the student, and vice versa.

This study represents one possible way to train teachers to heal their emotional wounds and transform those very wounds into an open heart of wisdom. Other possible
perspectives and philosophical approaches abound. There are many different ways to organize, explain and implement such a program, aiming at the same purpose of encouraging teachers to look deep within themselves in order to become better teachers. My own bias is evident. Because I was trained in Buddhist psychology and continue to practice Buddhist meditation and contemplative psychotherapy, I am interested in promoting those practical methods I have found useful in my own training. It is my aspiration that these methods will also prove to be of value in helping teachers to recognize the elemental wisdom of their emotions.

Jung (1969) believed that we as Westerners should search within our own cultural heritage and tradition to find the light of wisdom teachings and spiritual direction that has grown so dim in the modern era. He believed that to graft Eastern wisdom teachings on to a Western mentality was unnatural and ultimately fruitless. I have recently begun to respect this view to a certain degree; however, since I came to Buddhism first and only later began to appreciate the depth of wisdom existing in my own Western heritage from the vantage point of my Buddhist training, I believe that it is perhaps this kind of cross-fertilization around issues of meditation and intuitive insight that strengthens and enriches the tree of wisdom to bear good fruit.
CHAPTER 1 NOTES

1 This phase or style of consciousness lies somewhere between primary process and secondary process and forms an important link between the two distinct and practically antithetical modes. It has been described by many different observers in a variety of ways. Freud refers to it as prelogical in his Interpretation of Dreams, while Piaget (1961, 1977) terms a similar notion precausal. Ferenczi (1956) speaks of the magic words and thoughts as animistic, while Arieti (1967) speaks of paleological, and Sullivan (1953) refers to the use of language in this magical way as autistic language. Finally, Lacan (1968), who has investigated this phase or way of thinking extensively, calls it simply the 'forgotten language of childhood' (see also Schafer, 1978).

2 By dualistic consciousness, I mean consciousness arising out of the split between subject and object, self and other, this and that. For a thorough description of how our senses are perverted by dualistic consciousness and cluttered by preconception, see Hayward (1987). A friend of mine once spoke a haiku which, if I remember it correctly, went something like this:

Buddhism. Sit.
Subject-object. Subject/object.
Ermmmrrr. Ahhhhhhhhh...

3 I say 'speaking metaphorically' here because in using terms like 'subtle elements' and 'elemental energies' I am trying to describe something for which we do not have precise words in our contemporary English usage. Perhaps 'circuits of information' or 'fluctuating wave patterns of differences' might be more accurate. It is the purpose of this entire work to define and describe what I mean by elemental energies. Let me, however, be perfectly clear at the outset that by 'elements' I mean nothing material, or nothing remotely connected with the periodic chart of elements which perhaps you may recall as hanging in a place of reverence over your chemistry teacher's desk in high school. And by 'energy' I don't exactly mean that which does the work of pushing around billiard balls through space. On the contrary, these words are more suggestive of something which cannot be precisely stated with ease, something subtle, intuitive, and something rooted in a refined and intimate experience of our bodies, our minds and our emotions. If these ideas seem far-fetched or absurd, please read on. However, as a temporary measure I offer this quotation from Bateson (1972) and refer the reader to his article 'Form, Substance, and Difference,' in Steps to an Ecology of Mind. 'The individual mind is immanent but not only in the body. It is immanent also in the pathways and messages outside the body; and there is a larger Mind of which the individual mind is only a subsystem. This larger mind is comparable to "God," but it is still immanent in the total interconnected social system and planetary ecology.' (p.461)

4 The type of oppression and alienation I describe here was observed and documented by the social critics of the Sixties and early Seventies. John Holt described in How Children Fail (1964) how the tyranny of 'right answers' systematically suppresses a child's natural inquisitiveness. He described the classroom as an arbitrary and rigid environment producing anxiety, tension and a fear of being wrong. Kozol (1967, p. 14) noted that the unacknowledged role of teachers seemed to be 'to suppress and pulverize any sparks of humanity or independence or originality in children.' He also saw indoctrination in obedience to authority as 'the moral ether of our lives.' Kohl (1969) pointed out the insanity and hypocrisy of teaching ideals such as democracy in environments of suppression and totalitarian control. In the Sudbury Valley School Report from Massachusetts, The Crisis in American Education (1970, p. 31), schools were compared with prisons because students had no right to free speech or dissent. Radicals like Ivan Illich (1970) attacked the culture of professionalism for perpetuating itself with blind disregard for true humanitarian ends and advocated the Deschooling of Society. Perhaps Herndon (1969) best described the pressure of schooling on children in this way: 'Being bottled up for seven hours a day in a place where you decide nothing, having your success or failure depend, a hundred times a day, on the plan, invention, and whim of someone else, being put in a position where most of your real desires are not only ignored but actively penalized, undertaking nothing for its own sake but only for that illusory carrot of the future -- maybe you can do it, and maybe you can't, but either way, it's probably done you some harm' (Herndon, 1969, p. 197). This kind of critique is nothing new. Fielding (1967), the novelist, wrote in 1742, 'Public schools are the nurseries of all vice and immorality' (p. 230), while the aristocratic view on public education was summed up well by Thomas Jefferson when he wrote 'twenty of the best geniuses will be raked from the rubbish annually' (1964, p. 140).
This is the identified problem most frequently referred to child guidance clinics in the U.S. (Barkley, 1981). Despite controversy over the ethics of treating psychological, social, family, spiritual, moral, educational and political problems with medicine that can permanently alter the natural development of a child's brain and mind (Breggin, 1991a, b), hyperactivity is still frequently treated with stimulant medication such as Ritalin, Dexedrine, and Cylert (Barkley, 1983; Gittelman, 1983). Exact prevalence data do not exist, yet various estimates concur that in any given year nearly 2% of all school children in the United States receive medication for hyperactivity. Because this medication alters brain chemistry, hyperactivity was for a time referred to as 'minimal brain dysfunction' (Cantwell, 1977), despite the fact that Taylor and Fletcher (1983) assert that there is no real validation of a single syndrome that groups neurological, academic and behavioural characteristics or that shares a common etiology, treatment course or prognosis. Nonetheless, the need to apply a psychiatric label persists and the one currently in fashion is 'ADD' – Attention Deficit Disorder. Douglas (1980, 1983) interprets the research to show that hyperactivity is more of a cognitive than a motoric problem originating in deficits of sustained attention, poor inhibitory control and faulty modulation of arousal levels necessary for meeting task demands, also described as an inability to stop, look, listen and think. In the American Psychiatric Association's (1980) Diagnostic and Statistical Manual III, ADD refers to: behavioural syndromes in children characterized by inattention and impulsivity, with or without hyperactive features such as running, climbing, fidgeting and a difficulty in staying seated. All of this careful analysis and scientific terminology from my perspective fails to acknowledge the basic healthiness expressed in a child's movement and the disastrous effects of restricting it. Maybe the clinicians and researchers who insist on using such labels should go to a zoo and watch the tiger pacing in its cage, and then ask themselves: Is the tiger hyperactive? Breggin (1991b) uses the term 'psycho-pharmaceutical complex' to describe how economic and political forces link the billion dollar drug companies with what he calls biopsychiatry. This link occurs particularly through the power of drug money to exert control over editorial policies of medical journals and medical research, as well as the power to create a strong political lobby. For the past twenty-five years or more this process has effectively created a closed system of circular logic fundamentally based on maintaining and increasing drug sales. That doctors, researchers and consumers alike have been hoodwinked into believing that so-called hyperactivity is a genetic brain dysfunction is merely one symptom, according to Breggin, of this systemic sickness in our medical culture. He recounts the case of a young boy previously diagnosed as having ADD, who spent very little time with his parents, both hard-working professional people, and suggests that a more accurate diagnosis to replace ADD might be DADD "Dad Attention Deficit Disorder". 

The literature on stress (Selye, 1974; Benson, 1975; Pelletier, 1977; Kabat-Zinn, 1990) has described the autonomic physiological response to a perceived threat as the flight or fright mechanism, which includes hyperarousal, hyperkinesis, hyper-aggressiveness and increased hormonal incitement. Documentation has shown that if such a state of hyperarousal is prolonged, problems with health, perception, memory, attention, cognition and concentration can result. Krishnamurti (1953) has this to say about fear in education: "Fear prevents intelligence and is one of the causes of self-centered action. Discipline may suppress fear but does not eradicate it, and the superficial knowledge we receive in modern education only further conceals it. When we are young, fear is instilled into most of us both at home and at school. Neither parents nor teachers have the patience, the time or the wisdom to dispel the instinctive fears of childhood which, as we grow up, dominate our attitudes and judgement and create a great many problems. (p. 34)"

See note 5. The use of Ritalin to treat children who are not well served by the educational system and thereby stand out as a management problem is part of a larger problem in modern society. This problem is one of a blind faith in the biomedical model as a panacea for psychological, social, family, spiritual, moral, educational and political problems. The practice of treating people who act differently as having a 'medical problem' has a long history (Podvol, 1990; Bynum, Porter & Shepherd, 1985). It is so widespread and so ingrained as part of modern culture that it is hardly ever questioned. There have been insightful and compassionate radicals such as R.D. Laing (1959, 1968, 1969a, b), Cooper (1967), and Thomas Szasz (1961, 1970) who have pointed out that it is a sick society that labels extraordinary people as sick. More recently, Breggin (1979, 1983a, b, 1991a, b) has pointed out that through an economically-driven process of haphazard circumstances involving insurance companies, the billion-dollar, multinational pharmaceutical companies with their powerful lobbies, the American Psychiatric Association, and U.S. government agencies such as the Food and Drug Administration and the National Institute of Mental Health, the influence of psychologically-oriented professionals has been forced into a minor role while the genetically- and biochemically-oriented psychiatrists have consolidated power in
Experts have found that the term 'learning disabilities' is difficult to define (Vaughan & Hodges, 1973). By grade six I was diagnosed as having astigmatism.

There seem to be two camps among the people involved in special education with regard to the psychiatry itself has become an extension of the pharmaceutical industry' (p. 18). He explains that the reason for the relative economic success of biopsychiatry: 'it panders to the most self-destructive tendencies in human nature, especially the tendency to forsake self-determination and personal responsibility’ (p. 19). He carefully surveys the brain research and claims that despite the rhetoric of the drug companies there is no known genetic influence in any disorder described as mental illness and that there is no known biochemical defect causing such disorders as schizophrenia, manic-depressive disorder and ADD. According to Breggin the research is inconclusive and has been grossly distorted in the popular literature and promotional material to enhance the public image of the drug companies. While in truth, says Breggin, these drugs ‘don’t cure anything. They produce brain dysfunction and mental disability. At least they blunt the mind. At the worst, they permanently damage the mind. For example, the neuroleptics or antipsychotics, the so called “miracle drugs” of psychiatry, produce a chemical lobotomy by disrupting nerve transmission to the frontal lobes and emotion-regulating limbic structures. They also produce a permanent movement disorder, tardive dyskinesia, in at least 10-20% of routinely treated patients and at least 40% of long-term patients. Mounting research indicates they also produce dementia or deterioration of the brain and mind in a large percentage of long-term patients’ (p. 20). Although it may be argued that the use of stimulant medication to treat ADD and hyperactivity is more benign and the benefits of calming down a child outweigh the risks of altering brain chemistry and brain functioning, this does not address the fundamental ethical issues. Do parents, doctors and educators have the right to manipulate the brain chemistry of children to suit their own needs? For all we know, the hyperactivity, or chaotic mental energy, of these children may be the spawning ground of creative genius. How can we ever know the overall effects that such an invasive and controlling manipulation has on a child’s overall development? For my own part, I would estimate that 3% of my brain is still working.

By grade six I was diagnosed as having astigmatism.

Experts have found that the term ‘learning disabilities’ is difficult to define (Vaughan & Hodges, 1973) because no typical syndrome of behaviours is evident, and each learning disabled child has his or her own unique learning pattern, and because symptoms included in learning disabilities can have many other possible overlapping causes such as perceptual impairments, emotional disturbances, health problems, cultural differences and even poor instruction. Despite these problems and others which make learning disabilities a questionably coherent concept, a federal legal definition was established in the U.S. for the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. It reads: 'those children who have a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which disorder may manifest itself in imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations. Such disorders include conditions as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. Such term does not include children who have learning problems which are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor handicaps, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage (Federal Register, 1977, in McLoughlin & Notick, 1983)’ To justify existing curriculum and methodology, school professionals, parents and the medical profession have found it convenient to label deviant children as inadequate learners rather than open to any deep questioning of the Schooling culture itself (Sodhi, 1974). Perhaps educators and psychologists should look in the mirror and turn their diagnostic attention on themselves to find their teaching disabilities and uproot their limited assumptions as to what learning is, and what it is relevant to learn.

There seem to be two camps among the people involved in special education with regard to the negative effects of ascribing labels to children. There are those who take a philosophical position that labelling is harmful because labels distort a child’s self image as well as the expectations of teachers and educators, the two of which create a loop of distorted expectations (Hobbs, 1975; Dunn 1968; Mercer, 1973, 1979; Gottlieb, 1980). And there are those who minimize the negative effects of labels, wishing to maintain their right to diagnose and label (perhaps because they have invested money, time and mental energy in a university education that instilled in them faith in such labels and because their jobs depend on diagnostic labels). The first group tries to communicate to the second...
group by using the methods of communication that the second group will understand. They cite Social Deviance Theory (Becker, 1963) which shows how the label ‘juvenile delinquent’ affected the behaviour of teenagers and the study published by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) showing how powerful a few words can be in influencing the expectations of teachers and thereby the intellectual growth of children in their care. Armed with these studies, the first group tries to prove how diagnostic labels function as a self-fulfilling prophecy. Their critics in the second group, however, point to flaws in the research methodology of such studies and claim there is no conclusive evidence showing direct negative effects of special education labels. Meanwhile, the courts became involved when parents and ethnic leaders became outraged at the gross discriminatory educational practices hidden behind the apparent legitimacy of standardized tests and diagnostic labels (Hall, 1970; Bushnell, Jones & Olmstead, 1970, Ross, DeYoung & Cohen, 1971) summarized in Sodhi (1986). The overall result has been a turn toward mainstreaming of exceptional children (Gottlieb, 1980) partially because the legal and ethical ramifications have become too controversial; nevertheless the labelling continues, though it may be more subtle and perhaps more insidious, like bar-codes at the supermarket.

It is interesting to note that the mere presence of someone who takes a genuine interest in the idiosyncratic qualities of a child’s intelligence, aided by clever and stimulating devices like the Rorschach test and others, can have a profound effect on a child’s self-esteem. It seems that the intimate human contact, the patience, the gentleness, the precision and careful attention to minute details in the process of testing is more beneficial to the child than conclusions derived from the test results. The studies of Skeels and Dye (1939) and the follow-up study by Skeels (1965) dramatically demonstrate the power of a positive stimulating environment on development. Skeels and Dye moved thirteen infants from the minimally stimulating environment of an orphanage nursery to the more stimulating environment of a residential ward for mentally retarded adolescent girls. Using IQ testing, their study showed an average increase of 27.5 points in IQ for those moved after a nineteen-month period, and an average loss of 27.2 in IQ for the control group. IQ testing aside, the remarkable evidence was in the follow-up study, which found that the thirteen lucky ones were all self-supporting and represented a wide variety of occupational positions ranging from professional and semi-professional to semi-skilled labour and domestic work, while only 50% of the control group were employed and, with one exception, all of these were unskilled laborers. The median school grade attained by the experimental group was the twelfth, by the control group the third (Skeels, 1965). I suppose that Skeels and Dye have felt secure in knowing that members of the control group, with more or less a third grade education, would be unlikely to come across the published paper describing this unconscionable experiment.


For a comprehensive treatment of drama in education, see Way (1967). His simple definition of drama as ‘to practise living (p. 6)’ gets to the heart of what education is ‘really about. Furthermore, he tells us that education through drama ‘leads the inquirer to moments of direct experience, transcending mere knowledge, enriching the imagination, possibly touching heart and soul as well as the mind (p. 1).’ Way’s book is filled with sample exercises for training awareness, sensitivity, intuition, wonder and appreciation.

In my clinical work I have recently been involved with someone who has multiple personalities, and I have become aware of the extent to which many of us, including myself, have parts to our personalities which can function in opposition to one another or in a harmonious unified effort. For a description of the history and current practice of subpersonality theory see Rowan (1990).

At this time in the mid-’70s I read Abraham Maslow (1971). His notion of ‘peak experience’ seemed to me to be precisely what I glimpsed occasionally through the experience of acting. Also, the newly translated works of Artaud (1977) and Grotowski (1975), both of which treat acting as a path of awakening and spiritual transformation, had an influence on me at that time as well as influencing the teachers of the theatre school where I studied. For a full treatment of acting as a spiritual path see Bates (1988). Perhaps we are all actors. 'This life is like a bubble/ a dream/ a rainbow/ someone else's fantasy/ of what they think/ we're supposed to do' (from the closing of a recent letter from my friend and former clinical supervisor Jeffrey Fortuna).

Herbert Guenther explains ‘Attention to mind and getting hold of it by means of inspection and cognitive alertness reveals it to be a process phenomenon. This awareness enables a person to discard
such reductionistic views as presented by ego-logical assumptions, eternalistic claims, and substantialistic dogmas' (1989, p. 80).

17 As I write this, a group of fundamentalist Christians of the Branch Davidians sub-sect of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, under the seemingly deranged but charismatic leadership of David Koresh who believes that he is the messiah, have fortified themselves, with a fair-sized arsenal, in their compound outside Waco, Texas, against a small army of U.S. Federal agents, the National Guard and U.S. military. They are waiting for the end of the world, which may occur for them as it did for a community of religious fanatics in Jonestown, Guyana, in 1978, when they committed mass suicide by drinking poisonous Kool-Aid. These kinds of cults may come to mind for some readers when they come across words like meditation, and meditation master or guru. However, there are also in this world legitimate religious communities engaged in meditation practices led by legitimate yet powerfully charismatic and selfless, humble leaders. For a narrative history of Buddhism in North America, see Fields (1984). Chögyam Trungpa, as an important teacher of Buddhism in North America, did not escape controversy, rather he seemed to thrive on it. For a sharp critique of his personality, teaching style and lifestyle, see Butler (1990) and Clark (1980). Despite these criticisms, Trungpa's teachings continue to speak for themselves. For a clear description of meditation, see Trungpa (1973, 1976, 1981, 1988, 1991).

18 This kind of distracted mind has been investigated and well documented in Dissociation, Progress in the Dissociative Disorders: The Official Journal of the International Society for the Study of Multiple Personality and Dissociation. The basic theory of dissociation is consistent with many other psychotherapeutic theories, including psychoanalysis, psychosynthesis, transactional analysis, ego state therapy and others. Very simply, normal child development involves the assimilation of many diverse aspects of personality into a cohesive unit, while any trauma experienced tends to cause a disturbance in this process, causing a splitting off of various functional and temporal units of personality (i.e. part selves that perform different functions – nurturing, punishing, guilt ridden, social adept, etc. – and part selves associated with various memories and specific ages). The discontinuity between these various part selves is the cause of dissociation. Everyone experiences dissociation to some extent, particularly under stress. This may manifest as suddenly waking up from a daydream while driving or walking and not having any memory of how you got from one place to another. In more severe cases, as in those of multiple personality disorder, a person can switch states and lose track of hours and days through state-specific memory blackouts. A scale for measuring the severity of dissociation has been published in the above-mentioned journal. See Ross, Norton and Anderson (1988).

19 For a fuller description of this view of mental illness, see Podvoll (1990) and Searles (1979).

20 For more on the varieties of group psychotherapy, see Corey (1982).

21 This approach, at the Kantor Institute, which emphasizes self-knowledge and the development of a personal style, underscores the view that the theories of famous family therapists available in the literature are not so much discoveries of objective truths but rather personal insights that reflect the personality and cultural-familial history of each individual theorist. Acknowledging this, one sees that certain theorists strike a chord inside oneself whereas others don't. Finally, one takes pride in emulating the great theorists through the process of devising one's own style of doing therapy, borrowing where appropriate. I myself took an interest in the work of Jay Haley and Carl Whitaker. See Haley (1963, 1973, 1977, 1980) and Napier and Whitaker (1978). Whitaker has been known to fall asleep in the middle of a family therapy session and upon awakening to tell his dream to the family as an allegory of their particular family conundrum.

22 The phenomenon of cult followers becoming addicted to their leader is well known (see Galanter, 1989; Deikman, 1990; Lindholm, 1990). To my mind the best way of understanding the difference between master/disciple as a pathological dependency, and as a legitimate path to spiritual awakening is from Wilber's developmental perspective. Very simply put, people struggling with particular developmental fixations or layers of incomplete or perverted developmental solutions are vulnerable to master/disciple pathological dependency, while if these lower levels of development are more or less successfully completed, a person is ready for a healthy master/disciple relationship that points the way toward spiritual or transpersonal development. The pathological master/disciple relationship can be seen as an aspect of narcissistic personality disorder where the structure consists, as Wilber says, 'of a grandiose self-plus-omnipotent-object as a fused unit (1986, p. 109).’ For a thorough description of Wilber's full spectrum of development and the potential pathological side tracks, see Wilber, Enger and Brown
From my own experience of various Buddhist communities in North America, India and Nepal, I would agree that a lot of people are blindly trying to get rid of their self before they have even found it or developed it. In my own community there is a lot of controversy around this issue and the value of psychotherapy altogether. Those against psychotherapy argue that the self is an illusion, so why bother to develop it in the first place? My answer: A well-developed illusory self makes a better bodhisattva (one who postpones full enlightenment in order to help others).

From an Eastern cultural perspective and from the perspective of some aboriginal cultures from around the world, devotion and respect toward wise elders is known to be essential if the transmission of wisdom from one generation to the next is to take place (Suzuki & Knudtson, 1992). The relationship between teacher and student is central to the teaching and learning process and central to the awakening of elemental wisdom. In the Tibetan tradition (Trungpa, 1973), the apparent contradiction between believing that wisdom exists inherently and uniquely within each person to be found only through deeply felt personal experiences, and the belief that a wise elder is necessary to transmit or point out the essence of this wisdom within, is understood not as a contradiction but as an essential and ultimate unity. This unity of the self-discovery process and the necessity of a guide or mentor who points the way is a theme that runs through the history of Buddhism. Sogyal tells us that in the tantras it is written: 'Of all the Buddhas who have ever attained enlightenment, not a single one accomplished this without relying on a master, and of all the thousand Buddhas that will appear in this eon, none of them will attain enlig...mentation without relying on a master (Sogyal, 1992, p. 133).'

For further elucidation of this idea and the relationship between teacher and student in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, see Trungpa (1973), chapters 3, 4, 5, The Guru, Initiation, and Self-Deception; also see Sogyal (1992), chapter 9, and Nalanda Translation Committee (1980) especially "The Song of Lodro Thaye," pp. 81-90.

My experience of Buddhist and Christian dialogues based in contemplative and meditative experience, rather than intellectual speculation or dry 'theology,' especially during four years (1981-1985) of conferences on Buddhist and Christian Meditation at the Naropa Institute, have perhaps been the most profoundly useful experiences for helping me to recognize and integrate my previously unacknowledged need for a western perspective. Listening to the dialogue and practicing different methods allows for a freedom to uproot unconscious tendencies and expose some of the strong forces I find binding in our contemporary cultural context. I find dialogue gives me a perspective outside my own tradition with which to examine biases and prejudices that lie therein. These conferences have been edited into a book; see Walker (1987).
At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.
He called a child, set the child in front of him, and said
I tell you this, unless you turn round and become like children you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.
Humble yourself until you are like a child and you will be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

(Matthew 18:1-4)

All of us were once children and perhaps all of us have some vague intuition that if we were to become fully grown up we would in some way become once more like children, that is, open to the wonder of our being. Goethe tells us that 'the highest to which we can attain is wonder.' Existential and humanistic writers like Rollo May (1953) and Abraham Maslow (1971) agree that the most mature and creative adults, whether scientists like Einstein or artists like Matisse, somehow are able to maintain or reawaken the child’s capacity for wonder and awe.

In the last chapter I described two experiences from my own life with which I hope most people, if not everyone, can identify. The first is the joy, wonder and sense of inner freedom of being a child at play. The second is somehow losing that.

In the process of growing up and being conditioned into our particular culture we all experience a sense of loss, and a kind of psychic wounding. Whether this wounding is...
due to actual abuse, neglect, abandonment, consistent emotional hurtfulness and confusing messages, or whether it is just a consequence of our survival and the natural developmental process of growing up and taking on ever-increasing responsibilities, we all lose the simple and joyful mind of childhood. We lose the child's sense of openness, fresh perception and deep wonder, as well as a child's uninhibited curiosity and spontaneous playfulness. Some of us lose more than others, and some have managed to reawaken part of the wonder of childhood. Yet I have found, in my experience as a counsellor, educator and friend, that we as adults, for the most part, have a definite feeling that something has been lost, something very precious, something that we once had and took for granted.

The words of Jesus that I have quoted above raise within us what I understand to be a universal yearning, the yearning to become like a child again. The word 'like' is, of course, very important here as we do not wish to promote childishness, but childlikeness. From a strictly chronological perspective, our experience of childhood is lost forever. Even if it were not, it would not be sensible to actually become a child again, to be naïvely dependent and emotionally compulsive. This would be to remain childish rather than to become childlike. However, through a certain capacity for timelessness within the non-sequential and non-temporal mode of our minds, we as adults, with all that we have gained as adults—our knowledge, skills, abilities and confidence—can 'turn round' and become like little children, losing nothing of value that we have gained as a person. Instead we only lose our self-consciousness, our inhibitions, our conditioned repressiveness and, most importantly, our singular and egocentric reference point. Then, with the same enthusiastic energy, joyful wonder and vulnerable intensity of a child we can begin to open to the universe as a web of interconnections and cultivate intuitive wisdom.

'Humble yourself until you are like a child.' One way to interpret this turning around is to say that we need to backtrack over ground we have covered in developing our ego, and in learning how to be an adult. Turning around, we look at ourselves and we find that we need to clean house. We see that we need to disidentify from the limited forms of
thought, personality and being with which we have identified, in order to become functioning adults. To free ourselves to grow into the wisdom that has always been there, the intuitive wisdom and spontaneous action we have known ever since we were a child; we need to peel away that accumulated tendency to take ourselves too seriously as adults. To become humble is to admit that, whereas we once thought we knew the answers, now we are aware that we do not know. And to be humble also means we are willing to stay in that open space of not knowing, as that is the optimal place from which to grow and learn.

The developmental scheme of Ken Wilber (1980) attempts to blend the insights of multiple strains of Western developmental psychology and psychotherapy with insights from the world's religious, mystical and meditative traditions. Wilber draws a circle (see figure 1), putting ego-development as ascending up through childhood on the left and spiritual or transpersonal development as descending on the right. In this scheme, the top of the circle represents that precarious and ultimately unstable, anxiety-provoking position that most of us somehow manage to maintain as 'normal' adults — egohood.

![Figure 1 (i) General Life Cycle](image)

There is something intriguing in Wilber's elegantly symmetrical model, especially intriguing from the perspective of training teachers to be more aware of children and more
empathic to the emotional experiences of children. For Wilber, the second half of development, which he calls the inward arc, is the transpersonal journey beyond ego. It is in some ways a kind of mirror image of the first half, which he calls the outward arc. According to the contemporary perspective, childhood development seems to proceed in various stages toward the full integration of a relatively well-adjusted and well-defined personal self, a healthy individual ego. In the second half of development, according to Wilber's transpersonal theories, the process is reversed as one progresses beyond levels of self-actualization through various stages of spiritual growth that involve a progressive dissolving of the boundaries felt to exist between self and other, between the duality of subject and object in experience.

![Figure 1.(ii)](image)

Highlights of Life Cycle: Pre- vs. Trans-

From the perspective of these transpersonal levels, the achievements of the outward arc which are essential for everyday survival and intellectual ability are never lost, they are
simply subsumed or integrated within the broader perspective of non-dual wisdom. For Wilber, the ground of all development is a non-dual experience of being. From this ground as a child we gradually develop the duality of consciousness, defining ourselves as separate from our experience. However, eventually, through the process of maturation, adult development and spiritual growth, we return to this non-dual ground. We return to the direct and uncomplicated experience of a small child unencumbered by the restrictions of self consciousness.

What I refer to as elemental wisdom has to do with transforming the raw energy of childish emotions. Elemental wisdom is one way to understand and organize what might be called an archetypal intuitive awareness that begins to operate in the early and middle levels of spiritual development. However, it is important to note that the energy of emotions and the intuitive communication process of elemental wisdom are ultimately one-in-the-same, and therefore wisdom is available throughout all levels of development. It is the degree of sensitivity and maturity of mind’s awareness that perceives and organizes the elemental energies as either raw emotions or intuitive wisdom.

Wilber’s comprehensive developmental scheme is in accordance with that of Jung (1968a, b, 1972) who characterized the first half of life as concerned with individuation while the second half of life presents the challenge of transcendence. In individuation, the various aspects of the individual psyche reach their fullest degree of differentiation. The process of transcendence for Jung implied integrating the system of diverse archetypes into the self, with the goal of harmonious functioning, wholeness in diversity, and through a progressive integration of elements from the collective unconscious an intimate identification with all of humanity.6

Charles Tart (1987) refers to ego-consciousness, the apex of development in conventional psychology, as the ‘consensus trance’ or ‘the sleep of everyday life’ (pp. 62-106). He likens the process of enculturation to that of trance induction or hypnosis. He explains, however, that since the process of enculturation is constant and occurs day in
and day out for years and years throughout childhood and adulthood, it is thousands of times more numbing and pervasively controlling than the average hypnotic suggestion of the clinic or stage hypnotist. Tart’s perspective comes not only from years of experience investigating hypnosis and other altered states of consciousness as a scientifically trained psychologist, but also from years of immersing himself in the study and practice of the systems and techniques of liberation designed and taught by Gurdjieff (1950-63, 1973) and his primary student, Ouspensky (1977). Simply put, what Tart says is that we lose our childhood wonder because we are bombarded by lies and deceptions; we believe them, and quickly forget that we ever knew anything different.

Psychotherapy and counselling is one way of backtracking over the steps taken in becoming an adult, to overcome at least a few of the maladaptive habit patterns that might have formed in that painful process of growing up. One clear way of conceptualizing this process is through the theory and techniques of Redecision Therapy, a hybrid branch of Transactional Analysis influenced by Gestalt Therapy and pioneered by R. and M. Goulding (1972, 1976, 1982) and McNeel (1975).

Put very simply, this theory asserts that children adapt to stress in the family, or elsewhere in their lives, by making decisions about how to be, how to act, and who they are. These decisions stick, and unless a person consciously releases them they can continue to bind at least a part of the self, causing cycles of self-sabotaging and neurotic behaviour. These early childhood decisions may or may not be influenced by what are called injunctions, consistently repeated verbal and non-verbal messages from parents or other important authority figures, such as ‘be quiet,’ ‘hurry up,’ ‘try harder.’

A child who is consistently told to ‘hurry up’ may conclude that she is fundamentally slower than everyone else and therefore she must always hurry. As a consequence of this, in her adult life she may often feel compelled to rush around, driven by that inner voice that says hurry, hurry. When she hurries she is not aware of the present moment, does not attend properly to things that need to be done, and seldom finishes things. In
redecision therapy a skilled therapist might lead her into remembering what it felt like as a little girl to be told 'hurry up, hurry up, you're always running late.'

Remembering the feelings and perhaps visualizing a particular scene from her childhood, part of her can return to being a little girl at that time and discover what decisions she made about herself. Then the therapist guides her at the same time to access her mature and compassionate adult ego states to reparent the little girl. The nurturing parent and the rational adult parts of herself can give the little girl permission to change the decision and help her come up with a better alternative or perhaps none at all other than the freedom to respond to each new situation. Most importantly, the little girl needs to get the message that she can love herself just the way she is without having to adapt to outside forces in order to be loveable. Thereby she is able to relax the mental and physical energy that has been tied up in hurrying as a way to please someone else.

Since most of the injunctions and malfunctioning decisions were laid down in childhood at various different stages of development, it seems necessary, according to this model, to access the child ego state through regression or some form of emotional re-experiencing in order to achieve release. It seems that it does no good to go through these same steps in an intellectual way through a discussion or while reading, without accessing the feeling states, and the child’s way of thinking, expressing and understanding. In the past ten years or so this kind of therapeutic work has been written about in popular psychology and self-help books as inner child work and as reclaiming the inner child.⁸

When Eric Berne (1964, 1974) invented his simple and accessible terminology (which in some ways could be seen to replace Freud’s Super Ego, Ego and Id), as the Parent, Adult and Child ego states, the child ego state not only contained the powerful instinctual drives, but also all that is positive within the child, including the creative potential of emotional energies as well as a child’s sense of wonder, uncomplicated perception, and the ability to be spontaneous and playful. The positive aspects of the child are dubbed the Natural Child or Free Child in Transactional Analysis, while the Accommodating Child
or Adaptive Child stands for that tendency to doubt this positive energy of the Natural Child or go against it in the face of conflict or fear of conflict. This conflict could come from outside pressures of the family and social environment or intrapsychically from these same principles introjected into the parent ego state known as the Critical Parent.

The journey of shaking oneself loose from conditioning and one’s own peculiar adaptations to the environmental pressures experienced in childhood seems to be a common theme running throughout many of the various theories and practices of psychotherapy. In Jung’s notion of the Persona as the actor’s mask, we again find a compromise formation between the individual and society. Like Berne’s Accommodating Child ego state, Jung’s Persona is the archetype of adaptation. Jung also recognized the significance of the recurring God-Child or Holy-Infant in world mythology and religion as a strong archetype representing unlimited potential as well as what he called ‘futurity,’ a kind of foreshadowing of greater things to come. The Divine-Child archetype for Jung is the seed of the Self, which is Jung’s ultimate archetype of integration and transcendence. The self is the archetype of God within, symbolized as the figure of Christ, Buddha, the Wise Old Man, the Philosopher’s stone, the jewel or the treasure that is difficult to find.

The notion of ‘freedom’ and ‘authenticity’ in existential philosophy and existential psychotherapy also has this same tone of breaking free from one’s own constricting adherence to the pressures of social conditioning, to discover a deeper truth and guiding force from within. In existential psychotherapy neurosis is a sign of something brewing, a sign that one’s higher potential is ready to burst forth yet still somehow turned against itself. Rollo May (1953) puts it quite simply:

> If any organism fails to fulfill its potentialities, it becomes sick, just as your legs would wither if you never walked. But the power of your legs is not all you would lose. The flowing of your blood, your heart action, your whole organism would be the weaker. And in the same way if man does not fulfill his potentialities as a person, he becomes to that extent constricted and ill. This is the essence of neurosis – the person’s unused potentialities, blocked by hostile conditions in the
environment (past or present) and by his own internalized conflicts, turn inward and cause morbidity. (p. 95)

May's language of 'organism' and 'potentiality' is reminiscent of language developed by Carl Rogers (1977a) and his followers, during roughly the same period, to describe what they observed through their attentive, client-centred mode of counselling and psychotherapy:

We came to see the troubled or neurotic individual as one whose self concept had become structured in ways incongruent with his organismic experience.10

Perhaps the following passage from R. D. Laing (1968), writing within the turbulent ethos of the late 1960s, best describes what I focus on as the important turning point in the development of consciousness:

True sanity entails in one way or another the dissolution of the normal ego, that false self completely adjusted to our alienated reality; the emergence of the 'inner' archetypal mediators of divine power, and through the death a rebirth, and the eventual reestablishment of a new kind of ego functioning, the ego now being the servant of the divine, no longer its betrayer. (p. 119)11

This statement of Laing's, I believe, summarizes a broad range of nineteenth and twentieth century Western thought. In making such a statement, Laing stands on the shoulders of many giants. His statement was influenced by Jung's archetypal psychology as well as the philosophical perspectives of existential phenomenology in the writings of such thinkers as Nietzsche (1956), Kierkegaard (1944, 1954), Heidegger (1950, 1962), Sartre (1956, 1966), Buber (1958), Tillich (1952), Binswanger (1963) and Boss (1963). From another perspective, however, Laing is merely restating what has been expressed by great minds, by saints and sages, since the dawn of history.

Returning to the task of defining elemental wisdom, compare Laing's statement with the following, a casual formulation of the Buddhist journey toward wisdom made by
the contemporary, English-speaking, Tibetan meditation master and interpreter of Tibetan Buddhism to the West, Sogyal Rinpoche\textsuperscript{12} (1992):

Two people have been living in you all your life. One is the ego, garrulous, demanding, hysterical, calculating; the other is the hidden spiritual being, whose still voice of wisdom you have only rarely heard or attended to. As you listen more and more to the teachings, contemplate them, and integrate them into your life, your inner voice, your innate wisdom of discernment, what we call in Buddhism "discriminating awareness,"\textsuperscript{13} is awakened and strengthened, and you start to begin to distinguish between its guidance and the various clamorous and enthralling voices of ego. The memory of your real nature, with all its splendor and confidence, begins to return to you. You will find, in fact, that you have uncovered in yourself your own wise guide. Because he or she knows you through and through, since he or she is you, your guide can help you, with increasing clarity and humor, negotiate all the difficulties of your thoughts and emotions...

The more often you listen to this wise guide, the more easily you will be able to change your negative moods yourself, see through them, and even laugh at them for the absurd dramas and ridiculous illusions that they are. Gradually you will find yourself able to free yourself more and more quickly from the dark emotions that have ruled your life, and this ability to do so is the greatest miracle of all. (p. 120)

Meditation, which cultivates mindfulness and awareness, is the basis for training teachers in elemental wisdom. Meditation here does not refer to meditating on something in order to create a deep state of concentration or trance-like state of mind. Rather, meditation in Buddhist psychology refers to the practice of training the mind to become aware of itself as a process. Meditation is simply one direct and highly personal way of using the mind to learn about the mind or, as Shunryu Suzuki has said, "It is wisdom that is seeking for wisdom" (1970, p. 19).

The discipline of meditation according to Wilber (1980) fosters the ongoing developmental process especially with respect to the transpersonal phases beyond the limitations of ego awareness. Though there are extensive teachings concerning the phases
of realization and stages of meditative awareness within all Buddhist schools, strictly speaking, meditation is an end in itself and not a goal-oriented or teleological activity. From the timeless perspective of the Buddha’s enlightenment there is no such thing as development. There is only the eternally awakened mind of the present moment. If you take on the posture of the Buddha and are fully present in the ‘now’ you are the Buddha. Shunryu Suzuki (1970) explains this point in discussing the posture of meditation:

Enlightenment is not some good feeling or some particular state of mind. The state of mind that exists when you sit in the right posture is, itself, enlightenment. If you can not be satisfied with the state of mind that you have in zazen, it means your mind is still wandering about. Our body and mind should not be wandering about. In this posture there is no need to talk about the right state of mind. You already have it. This is the conclusion of Buddhism. (p. 28)

Anyone can have a glimpse of the enlightenment experience of the Buddha if only for a fraction of an instant. In fact, it is not a rare occurrence and happens frequently throughout the experiences of our daily lives. The path of meditation has to do with first learning to recognize this natural state of mind, then learning how to maintain it, and finally learning how to integrate it into the nitty-gritty details of life. From the relative perspective of the undisciplined mind and our more common experience of confusion, it is nonetheless useful to speak of meditation as a process of development that uncovers our awakened mind of innate intuitive wisdom.

Most of us are usually so engrossed in the content of mind or so completely distracted by the outwardly appearing projections of mind that we have no awareness of how mind actually works. Meditation practice allows us to gently disengage ourselves from the content of mind so that we can observe the process of mind. This allows us to open ourselves to learning things about ourselves that we never knew, and then to gradually make friends with all aspects of ourselves, which eventually leads to becoming fully who we are.
This style of insight meditation is not purely a mental exercise. In this practice the body is equally as important as the mind. Because mind is fickle, formless and generally hard to pin down, meditation practice uses the body to anchor the mind. Normally, when we engage our mind in something we ignore our body. The first step in meditation is to bring the mind fully into the experience of the body in the present moment, to gradually synchronize body and mind. Most people find their minds to be racing ahead or away from their bodies. The discipline of meditation brings some peace to the mind so that body and mind work together. This is called mindfulness or the practice of bringing back a wandering mind so that it is grounded in the body and in the present moment. From my experience of working with myself and with others in various professional contexts I have come to believe that the potential value of introducing mindfulness as a technique in education is inestimable.\textsuperscript{15} William James (1961) has said:

\begin{quote}
The faculty of voluntarily bringing back a wandering mind, over and over again, is the very root of judgement, character and will. No one is \textit{compos sui} if he have it not. An education which should improve this faculty would be the education \textit{par excellence}. (p. 424)\textsuperscript{16}
\end{quote}

Mindfulness is the basic discipline of meditation. From mindfulness, awareness naturally develops. The term awareness in this specific sense refers to the ability to observe the process of mind in a more objective and dispassionate manner within the broader context of everyday actions and relationships.\textsuperscript{17} From this comes a kind penetrating insight, an intuitive wisdom known in Buddhism as the highest knowing or \textit{prajna} in Sanskrit (\textit{pra}-highest, \textit{jna}-knowing) and as \textit{sherab} (\textit{she}-knowing, \textit{rap}-best) in Tibetan. This is the capacity referred to in the passage above by Sogyal as the 'innate wisdom of discernment' and 'discriminating awareness.'

Often translated as discriminating awareness, \textit{prajna} does not refer to discriminating in the sense of developing bias. Rather, it is discrimination that sorts out confusion and neurotic habit patterns from clear and straightforward thought and action. \textit{Prajna} is a higher
form of intelligence neither limited by what we want for ourselves nor by what we think we know.

_Prajna_ is said to be the highest knowing because it is knowing about the process of knowing. In our normal mode of knowing we tend to cling to concepts. In Buddhism, _prajna_ is said to be a free and open cognition that is not perverted in its clarity either by the cognizer or the object of cognition. It is not the process of using concepts held in the memory to interpret reality. Rather, it is insight that dawns fresh in every instant and is therefore never out of step with the changing world. Teachers trained in this kind of awareness would ideally see their students rather than their preconceptions.

_Prajna_, the pivotal concept of Mahayana Buddhism, is also essential in transforming childish emotions into elemental wisdoms. If our school teachers of today had the opportunity to practice meditation in their training they might find that they could gradually cultivate this natural sharpness in their intrinsic awareness and then, with further training, expand it by uncovering their own unique style of diverse wisdom qualities associated with the five elements.

To fully understand how _prajna_ works we need to look more deeply into Buddhist philosophy. The centrepiece of the _Mahayana_ wisdom teachings is an extension of a doctrine known in the earlier and more conservative _Hinayana_ school of Buddhism as dependent origination (_pratitya-samutpada_), which explains that all causes and conditions of existence are chainlinked in a cycle and arise as interdependent. In the Mahayana this becomes the realization of _shunyata_, emptiness, the realization that nothing exists in and of itself. All things are devoid of their ‘own being’ (_svabhava_) because they depend upon the universal totality in the nexus of causal conditions. In these teachings, _prajna_ is said to be that wisdom which sees _shunyata_, emptiness. As Trungpa (1973) says:

Prajna is intelligence, the all seeing eye, the opposite of the ego’s watching itself doing everything (p. 178).
Seeing the interdependent unity of all things, the multiplicity of dharmas (tiniest atoms of experience) are empty. Likewise all the various components of complex psychological processes described in the Buddha’s teachings known as the Abhidharma\textsuperscript{21} are empty. ‘Form is emptiness and emptiness is form. Emptiness is no other than form and form is no other than emptiness’ reads the Heart Sutra, a condensed version of the Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra (great wisdom perfection scripture). Therefore all things experienced in this world are seen as nothing other than reifications of conceptual and linguistic distinctions formed in an energetic and creative process. This process of projecting our experience, characterized in the Buddhist teachings as ignorance, avidya\textsuperscript{22} begins with the first flicker of duality which separates ‘that’ from ‘this.’

Prajna in its highest form sees through the illusion of any apparently solid existence as if it were merely a dream. However, this perfection of wisdom is also not biased into accepting any rigid nihilistic interpretation of reality, either. For this is regarded, in the subtleties of Buddhist philosophy and meditative realization, as the mistake of regarding emptiness itself as real. To quote the great Indian poet and Mahasiddha (realized master) Saraha:

\begin{quote}
Those who postulate particular existents are stupid like cattle,
But those who postulate particular non-existents are stupider than these. (Guenther, 1989, p. 97)
\end{quote}

This non-dual insight is the essence of the Buddhist ‘Middle Way’ and was chiefly espoused in the teachings of Nagarjuna, the founding father of mahayana philosophy, who, as legends would have it, is said to have recovered the Buddha’s original teachings on the wisdom of emptiness from a king of the water serpents after hundreds of years of safekeeping in the depths of his watery realm. These teachings on the wisdom of emptiness were hotly debated throughout India during most of the first millennium, giving rise to many various schools of thought that held a variety of slightly differing views.\textsuperscript{23}
The original Buddhist teachings concerning nirvana as an end of suffering and the cessation of the tendency to give rise to the causes that fuel samsara (the cycles of recurring existence and suffering) were raised to a new level by this perspective of non-dual wisdom. Nagarjuna tells us that: ‘There is not the slightest difference between samsara and nirvana. ... The perimeter of nirvana is also the perimeter of samsara, In between them not the slightest shade of difference is found’ (Guenther, 1989, p. 96). From this non-dual perspective the only thing that separates a Buddha or awakened one from all the rest of us who wander in samsara is the perfection of wisdom or prajnaparamita. It is this non-dualistic philosophy which I am advocating as the ground of contemplative education and contemplative teacher training. In my experience, the non-dualistic perspective developed through meditation allows the student and the teacher to open fully to themselves and to each other, accepting the chaotic emotional energies that arise in the process of learning, because they know intuitively and experientially that within the confusion and discomfort of these emotions, there is wisdom.

Chögyam Trungpa’s explanation of two-fold prajna, described while speaking to North Americans in the early 1970s, summarizes the non-dualistic way:

The bodhisattva transmutes the watcher or ego into discriminating knowledge, prajna paramita. ‘Pra’ means ‘super,’ ‘jna’ means ‘knowing: super-knowledge, complete, accurate knowledge which sees everything. Consciousness fixed on ‘this and ‘that’ has been cut through, which produces the twofold knowledge, the prajna of knowing and the prajna of seeing.

The prajna of knowing deals with emotions. It is the cutting through of conflicting emotions – the attitudes that one has towards oneself – thereby revealing what one is. The prajna of seeing is the transcendence of primitive preconceptions of the world. It is seeing situations as they are. Therefore the prajna of seeing allows for dealing with situations in as balanced a way as possible.... The bodhisattva no longer experiences the irritating quality that comes from distinguishing between this and that. He (she) just sails through situations without needing to check back. (1973, p. 178)
According to this Buddhist understanding of wisdom, teachers experienced in the prajna of knowing will be aware of the excess baggage of their personal unfinished emotional business from their past and any other negative emotion based on indulgent self-consciousness. Teachers experienced in the prajna of seeing will not misinterpret the needs of students based on preconceptions but will be sensitive and responsive to the needs of students as they arise, able to learn from the students themselves ways to teach which are appropriate and suited to the moment.

In the sacred traditions of the world, the process of uncovering inherent wisdom by gradually peeling away the layers of conditioning has been practiced for thousands of years, spawning a great diversity of techniques and methods. These are the contemplative traditions which according to Aldous Huxley represent the highest development of human culture. Great institutions of higher learning throughout history such as Nalanda in India and the great universities of Medieval Europe such as Oxford and Cambridge in England and their equivalents on the Continent, as well as the overall tradition of liberal arts colleges in North America were originally inspired and maintained as contemplative communities designed to transmit and protect various kinds of sacred teachings having to do with contemplation and the cultivation of wisdom. Yet in our universities and colleges of today this search for inner wisdom and intuition has been, to a large extent, lost in the fervor of rationalism, scientism and the materialistic view of knowledge.

We cannot be fully active except we be partly contemplative, nor fully contemplative (at least on earth) without being partly active. Active life is begun and ended in this life; not so the contemplative. It begins in this life and goes on eternally.

The Cloud of Unknowing

The gradual cultivation of intuition, or what I am calling elemental wisdom, would allow teachers to trust themselves and their own perception, in order to connect on a more direct and intimate level with the children they teach. Psychological theories of learning,
cognition and development can be helpful, yet compared to the immediacy of intuition and direct experience, these theories can seem cumbersome. Teachers can uncover their own inherent ability to perceive their students accurately. They can creatively develop lesson plans to address what is needed in order to draw out each individual child’s ability to learn and grow. By training their intuition through practising contemplative exercises designed to heighten their experience of the five styles of elemental wisdom, teachers can begin to uncover those special qualities of wonder and spontaneity in themselves to join in a parallel experience with the children they teach.

We are thinking reeds but our great works are done when we are not calculating and thinking, “Childlikeness” has to be restored with long years of training in the art of self-forgetfulness. When this is attained, we think yet we do not think. We think like showers coming down from the sky: we think like the waves rolling on the ocean; we think like the stars illuminating the nightly heavens; we think like the green foliage shooting forth in the relaxing spring breeze. Indeed we are the showers, the ocean, the stars, the foliage.

D. T. Suzuki
CHAPTER 2 NOTES

1 I wish to acknowledge my debt to a talk given at a conference on Christian and Buddhist meditation at Mount St. Vincent University in Halifax, N.S., in March of 1993 by Father Laurence Freeman of the Benedictine Christian order. Father Laurence used this passage to introduce the healing power of Christian meditation. Father Laurence is a student of John Main, an important figure in the revival of meditation in the Catholic tradition. John Main has written several books on Christian meditation (1985, 1988, 1990, 1991), as has Father Laurence Freeman (1986, 1989).

2 Quoted in R. May (1953), p. 212. To remove the gender bias from this quotation I have replaced the term 'man' with the first person plural 'we.' Goethe also wrote in the Prelude to Faust (1926), 'Age does not make us childish, as they say. It only finds us true children still;' and in Hermann und Dorothea (1968), 'We can't form our children on our own concepts; we must take them and love them as God gives them to us.' For an interesting treatment of Goethe's spiritual understanding of nature and methods for training observation and thought, see Lehr's (1938), a book written within the anthroposophical tradition of Rudolf Steiner, the founder of Waldorf schools. In addition to having his own mystical visions, Steiner was a Goethe scholar and derived much of his inspiration from Goethe's metaphysics describing an interconnected relationship between mind and nature.

3 Einstein is reported to have said, 'One cannot but be in awe when (one) contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries to merely comprehend a little of this mystery each day. Never lose a holy curiosity. (Clark, 1971, p. 243)' Nikos Kazantzakis (1967), in his celebrated novel of earthy spirituality, Zorba the Greek, also tells us, 'The highest point a [person] can attain is not Knowledge, or Virtue, or Goodness, or Victory, but something even greater, more heroic and more despairing: Sacred Awe! (p. 24).'

4 R. May (1953, p. 112) says that the statement by Jesus has nothing to do with 'childishness' or 'infantilism.' In contemporary psychotherapy, 'healing the inner child' involves identifying childish behaviours and tendencies to indulge childish emotions in adults as discrete ego states fixated, or frozen in development, as a reflection of the child's 'survival' response to trauma. If the child ego state can be reassured, through therapeutic interventions, that he or she is now safe, protected and loved by the adult ego state, then the bound-up energy of the child is released, and the capacity of wonder and creativity can begin to blossom in the adult. The simplicity of this conceptualization of the therapeutic process has allowed it to become extremely popular in the self-help literature; see notes 9 and 10 below.

5 The different modes of our consciousness of time have been discussed by many. Still a classic in this regard is the chapter 'The Temporal Dimensions of Consciousness' in Ornstein (1972). Piaget (1954, 1977) found that our sense of time is built in four distinct steps. In Gestalt Psychology, Lewin (1951) also speaks of our sense of time being built up. He imagines it like a house with the floor being 'real' time and the roof an imaginative or psychological time built of hopes and fears; together these form what he called the reality-irreality dimension of time. Whorf (1956), the linguist, noted an absence of tenses in the Hopi language. Lee (1949), an anthropologist, found that Trobriand islanders had no word for history and observed that they were not at all interested in communicating what we would refer to as chronological sequence. Fraser (1966) tells us that Newton conceived of two types of time, as did Leibnitz and Bergson. Loeve (1983) theorizes three types of time: timeless time of mystics and psychic precognition, which he associates with the 'holographic universe' of Bohm (1980) and the holographic mind theory of Pribram, Nuwer and Baron (1974); spatial time, associated with the Gestalt theories of Kohler (1970) and the 'right-brain' theories of Sperry (1985a, b); and finally, our familiar serial time, the kind that rules our lives with the tick tick ticking of clocks.

6 Jung spoke of individuation as teleological, purposive, synthetic and constructive. The tendency for the psyche or soul to develop towards wholeness and the balance of opposite forces results in a unique personality, deep and rich, unified and coherent. See Jung (1968a), especially 'Conscious, Unconscious and Individuation,' and 'A Study in the Process of Individuation.' The section entitled 'Concerning Mandala Symbolism' also deals with individuation. Other authors who deal with the topic of individuation in a similar manner include Jacob (1967), Adler (1961) and Wheelwright (1981). The spiritual path of transcendence in Jung's work is primarily found in his writings on alchemy. Jung understood alchemy as a psychic projection of an inner spiritual transformation onto the chemical substances of the outer alchemical laboratory. In the hermetic language of alchemy he found a complex symbolic psychology. Built upon an apparently irrational structure with bizarre imagery, Jung found alchemy to
be a highly refined system completely in accordance with his investigations of dreams, cross-cultural mythology and the structural process of psychotherapy. Reading Jung is difficult enough, but the alchemical works are particularly challenging, filled as they are with strange imagery and obscure Latin and Greek terms drawn from ancient Gnostic and Hermetic sources. To learn about alchemy in Jung's writing, Hopcke (1989) has some suggestions on how to proceed. In the complete works of Jung, see *Psychology and Alchemy*, Vol. 12, especially Part 1, 'Introduction to the Religious and Psychological Problems of Alchemy'; and in Part 3, 'Religious Ideas in Alchemy,' the sections on 'Basic Concepts in Alchemy,' 'The Psychic Nature of the Alchemical Work,' 'The Work,' and 'The Prima Materia.' Others who have written on alchemy from this Jungian perspective include Von Franz (1979, 1980) and Edinger (1985). Jung may have found that it is hard for Westerners to fully appreciate wisdom from Eastern cultures, yet in my own experience, at least, I find Buddhist and Taoist teachings much easier to understand and swallow than those of alchemy, which I suppose are just not my cup of tea.

Therapy as such is not my topic here, although I work as a psychotherapist specializing in helping people to heal from childhood traumas such as sexual, physical and emotional abuse (Black, 1981; Bradshaw, 1988; Butler, 1985; Davis, 1990; Ernst & Goodison, 1981; Gil, 1988; Herman, 1992; Maltz, 1991; Miller, 1983; Porter, 1986; Russell, 1986; Wootz, 1985; Zimplor, 1987). Although I certainly think that teachers could benefit from therapy, the contemplative approach I advocate is more self-directed and involves working directly with emotions from moment to moment with heightened awareness. I believe that integrating a certain amount of therapeutic process into teacher training is essential, yet a full course of therapy is probably not practical or necessarily advisable. The contemplative approach described here is meant to give teachers the tools (meditation practice, contemplative exercises and an introduction to self-healing, as well as a conceptual map of transpersonal psychology and spiritual growth) to help them to continue the process of awakening on their own.

Beginning in the redevelopment and reparenting work of Transactional Analysis (see Goulding, R. 1972; Goulding & Goulding, 1972, 1976, 1982), through the literature on separation and ego state therapy (Kristen & Robertillo, 1978; Watkins & Watkins, 1978, 1979) into works on adult children of alcoholics (Scixas & Youcha, 1985) and co-dependency (Cermak, 1986), through to the works by authors such as Mills and Crowley (1986), Whitfield (1987), Wickes (1988), Oaklander (1989), and Bradshaw (1990), the notion of the inner child as an independently structured ego state operating within the adult who was traumatized as a child has gained wide acceptance, particularly as a technique for helping people overcome negative and self-defeating behaviours. Some have criticized this movement, saying that people end up using their inner child as an excuse for their negative behaviours rather than using the technique to heighten awareness and step out of them. *C'est la vie.*

Known as the *puer* in men, and the *kore or maiden* in women, Jung's Divine-child archetype, derived predominantly from classical mythology, resembles Pan the pastoral piper and his descendant Peter Pan who refuses to grow up. This archetype is closely associated with the Mother archetype and only finds fruition or transformation in the successful separation from the Mother. See Jung (1968a), 'The Psychology of the Child Archetype,' and 'Psychological Aspects of the Mother Archetype,' and in Jung (1967) 'The Psychological Aspects of the Kore'; as well as Von Franz (1981), Hillman et al (1979) and Kerényi (1963). Also Stevens (1983) deals with the *puer* well while theorizing about a possible biological basis for Jung's archetypes. The *puer* has also taken a central place in the recent books dealing with the psychology of being male. Bly (1990), Keen (1991), and Moore and Gillette (1990) all use the Jungian concept in grappling with the problem of how boys become men.

Rogers, 'Theory of Therapy, Personality and Interpersonal Relationships, as Developed in the Client-Centred Framework,' quoted in Corsini (1977a, p. 192). The theoretical models of Rogers seem exceedingly complex, perhaps in direct proportion to the directness and simplicity of his therapeutic methods. One cannot help but think that this complexity of theory was in defense of such simple and yet effective therapeutic methods in a culture where simplicity is often perceived suspiciously to be anti-intellectual, or worse, to be too obvious to have any real value.

Laing's view that schizophrenia is a sane response to a sick society was also proclaimed by H. S. Sullivan who, according to Laing, used to tell young psychiatrists: 'I want you to remember that in the present state of our society, the patient is right, and you are wrong' (p. 91).

The term Rinpoche is a Tibetan word meaning precious one and is an honorific term almost always added after a teacher's or meditation master's name to signify that he or she is a respected teacher, a *guru* or *lama.*
Prajna, a Sanskrit term often translated as transcendent knowledge, was described as 'discriminating awareness wisdom' by Trungpa in the early 1970s, and Sogyal is following this. Prajna is often described as having two levels: 1. Ordinary or lower prajna, which involves penetrating scrutiny of inspection and an analytical appreciative understanding; and 2. Higher prajna, which comes as a result of perceiving the emptiness of phenomena and the emptiness of self. It is the experience of pure cognition as a process without reference to a knower and known as separate aspects of the one process. See Guenther (1972), p. 59.

For some books describing the path of Buddhist meditation from a few different traditions as taught to Western students by contemporary masters, see Chödrön (1991) for a woman's perspective within the Tibetan tradition; and the works of the celebrated Vietnamese monk Nhat Hanh (1987, 1988, 1990, 1991, 1992) for talks on various forms of mindfulness meditation, awareness meditation and the contemplative process for cultivating peace both within oneself and in the outer world; and Goldstein and Kornfeld (1987) for a psychologically-oriented perspective of the Indian and South Asian Theravadin tradition.

In the past fifteen or twenty years various Buddhist meditation practices and contemplative disciplines designed to train mindfulness and awareness have been taught to hospital patients who experience severe pain and other debilitating effects of chronic illnesses. The success that these people have had in training their minds to be in the present and thereby decrease the psychosomatic components associated with their chronic illnesses have been well documented and presented by Kabat-Zinn (1990). I equate the education of teachers with the training of sick patients, and hope it is a just comparison.

In his thorough analysis of the lack of a substantial identity present in the stream of successive states of consciousness, James (1961, pp. 212-226) was aware of the insubstantiality of self. His approach is reminiscent of early Buddhist abhidharma texts that atomized experience into dharmas, or even the later Mahayana philosophy of madyamika that uses a systematic logic of deconstruction to prove the emptiness of self and phenomena (Pabongka, Tharchin & Roach, 1990). James seems to have come to this awareness through introspection and a systematic reductive logic. He cites Kant's description of the discontinuous self (See Kant, 1950, Smith, Translation) passed on in distinct states of consciousness being like billiard balls passing on a self notion when the bounce, but nowhere, as far as I know, does he cite the Buddhist doctrines. James concludes '...that the states of consciousness are all that psychology needs to do her work with. Metaphysics or theology may prove the soul to exist; but for psychology the hypothesis of such a substantial principle of unity is superfluous' (James, 1961, p. 14).

In the spiritual work taught by Gurdjieff (1950-1963, 1973), this kind of awareness practice is termed self-remembering: 'One of the practices Gurdjieff taught for self remembering actually functions through literally re-remembering ourselves, using deliberate attention to our members of our body as a reminder of our greater self, to anchor ourselves against the powerful currents of automated functioning that usually sweep away what little consciousness we have.... The practice is called sensing, looking, and listening' (Tart, 1987, p. 198).

Mahayana (Tib. theg-pa-chen-po; greater vehicle), was the second major trend in Buddhism which appeared in literary form several hundred years after the Buddha's death. The Mahayana expanded the buddhadharma to the lay population in contrast to the Hinayana (narrow or inferior vehicle, named thus by the followers of the Mahayana) schools of Buddhism, primarily practised in monastic communities.

The Prajnaparamita Sutras (perfection of wisdom scriptures) forming the philosophical foundation of Mahayana Buddhism first began to appear between 300 and 100 B.C.E. However, according to the sutras themselves, the transmission lineage goes back to the historical Buddha, who is said to have first presented these teachings, also known as the second turning of the Wheel of Dharma (for a discussion of the three turnings of the Wheel of Dharma, see Snellgrove, 1987, pp. 79-116) on Vulture Peak Mountain near Rajagaha to a secret gathering of his most accomplished disciples and an assembly of celestial beings.

For a concise discussion of pratitya-samutpada, see Simmer-Brown (1987).

For a full description of abhidharma, see Guenther (1976) and Guenther and Kawamura (1975).

A negation of vidya, primordial pristine awareness or the wisdom of enlightenment, avidya is described by Guenther (1976) as 'the inability to see things in their correct perspective and to deal with them accordingly' (p. 47). It is a mental challenge to understand the relationship between ignorance and
enlightenment in Buddhism, for as Guenther says: 'ignorance (avidya) and enlightenment (bodhi) are one and the same though not as a mathematical equation' (p. 235).

23 For more on the history and doctrine of Nagarjuna and the other Mahayana schools, see Jha (1973), Streng (1967), Williams (1989), Kaluphana (1976), Pabongka, Tharchin and Roach (1990).

24 Aldous Huxley says: 'In all the Historic formulations of the Perennial Philosophy, it is axiomatic that the end of human life is contemplation ... that action is the means to that end; that a society is good to the extent that it renders contemplation possible for its members; and that the existence of at least a minority of contemplatives is necessary for the well-being of any society' (1944, p. 294).

25 Smith (1971) examines some of the philosophical issues of concern in higher education as the tension between opposites: absolutism versus relativism, objectivity versus commitment, freedom versus authority, egoism versus altruism, the individual versus the state, and sacred versus secular. In the tension between each set of opposites he finds a non-dual synthesis which transcends the limitations of the polarized concepts. In the second part of this work, where he examines the aims of liberal education, writing on the motivation to seek self-realization or the highest possible level, he says: 'Liberal education should inspire students with a lasting impatience with "civilized triviality". It must make them determined to integrate their capacities on the highest level possible, and must cause them to understand that if they are to do so, three things are needed: an impelling vision of what their lives can be, an understanding of the techniques by which this vision can be realized, and the personal discipline and supporting social context which will enable them to persevere in the practice of these techniques' (pp. 203-204).

26 The unknown author of this classic Christian contemplative work was most probably an English priest who lived during the second half of the 14th century. Judging by his language, he is assumed to be a country parson of the East Midlands. See Wolters (1961), p. 71. I have altered this quotation, replacing the word 'man' with 'we' to remove gender bias.

27 Once again I have altered this quotation, replacing the word 'Man' with 'we' to remove the gender bias. Quoted in Watts (1970), p. 125.
Chapter 3
Sacred Wisdom Roots and The Non-dual Ground

- Knowledge and action unite • Sophia the wife of God • Therapy with the Muses • Temples in the sky • The wisdom womb • The phallus of action • Dissolving separation • You are the music • Unperceived goodness • Unity and peace/buzz bloom and confusion • Bucke wrapped in flames • Beyond the filmiest of screens • No boundary • Feeling others’ feelings • This, not this • Ancient shamans convert to yoga • Thou art that • Become like water • Do nothing and get everything done • Become one body with heaven and earth • Dance with intellect and intuition • A way not a what •

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Anyone who tries to describe the ineffable light in language is truly a liar – not because he hates the truth, but because of the inadequacy of his description.

St. Gregory of Nyssa

Throughout history the ideal of wisdom can be seen as a recurring theme running like an underground stream through the various cultures and peoples of the earth. The cultivation and transmission of cumulative experience about the art of living, sound judgement and practical ability pre-dates any formal philosophy or science. Wisdom is most generally defined as the ability to discern what is true, right and just in a situation and furthermore to act upon this insight. One is wise if one has sound judgement regarding how to conduct one’s life—in particular, how to conduct one’s life in relation to others. Wisdom is that very trait which allows teachers to perceive their students clearly, without bias, and then to guide these students based on what they need as unique individuals, so that the students can find their own style of wisdom within themselves.

Socrates, who, according to Plato, embodied the ideal of wisdom in his being and his actions, insisted in his inquiries that knowledge and virtue were one. His lessons seem
to indicate that if someone knew what virtue was, in all the subtlety and nuance of each situation, proper conduct would automatically follow. Wisdom, it seems, has to do with this unity of knowledge and action.

The Indo-European root of the word wisdom *uied* (also apparent in the Greek word *idein*, ‘idea’ and in the Latin *videre*, ‘to see’) connotes ‘perceiving, seeing.’ Thus, wisdom, though related to knowledge, has more to do with clear perception of events in the present moment with respect to their context within a greater web of causes and effects. Hence the wise are able to perceive the undercurrents affecting a situation directly, without pausing to think about it, and thus they are not fooled by illusory appearances or the superficial masks of reality. Let us call this the insight aspect of wisdom, where one is open to seeing the patterns of how things connect in life and in the world. The other aspect of wisdom is putting this insight into direct and effective action, which at times might mean no action at all, or what the Taoists call the action of non-action.

In ancient Greece the term *sophia*, used to refer to the higher wisdom of the great philosophers, was also used in the vernacular to refer to a kind of everyday practical wisdom. This practical *sophia* implied a kind of cleverness, dexterity, and skill in one’s profession, be it medicine, poetry, carpentry or music. The knack that comes with practice involves chiefly a refinement of perception so that one picks up increasingly more detail and develops higher levels of sophistication in one’s awareness of subtle patterns of interconnection, as well as a refinement of dexterity and ability.

The Greek term *sophia* was also used as a translation of the Hebrew term *Hokhamah* in the Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures. *Hokhamah*, variously described as the wife of Yahwe, the spirit of God, the first level of manifestation outward from the utter formlessness of god, and the wisdom of god, later became the Holy Ghost in Christian terms and lost its original feminine identity.

The femininity of this primordial wisdom deity has a long and complicated history in the pre-Greek and pre-Hebrew Mediterranean, where the goddess representing this first
wisdom principle was referred to as Anat, Athirat and Astarte (associated with the later Greek goddess Aphrodite). It is believed that the Hebrew Hokhamah is perhaps derived from the Egyptian Heq-Matt or a similar Canaanite goddess, both of whom were universal mothers of creation serving as the cosmic womb that either gives birth spontaneously or through enticing the formless potential-laden male God into manifestation. In ancient civilizations mythology relating to God's wisdom often seems to involve a feminine principle as a necessary intermediary to coax forth the un-manifest into the manifest.

Quispel (1987) tells us that Sophia is described as an emanation of God's glory, the Holy Spirit, the immaculate mirror of his energy, and as the spouse of the lord in a Greek version of the apocryphal book The Wisdom of Solomon (written in Alexandria around the time of Christ). While in later Gnostic teachings the Holy spirit Sophia was referred to as the first Idea of God. Sophia as a feminine personification of wisdom was said to treat a wise man at times like a mother doting on her favourite child, while at other times surprising him with unexpected wildness like a young and wanton mistress. Also in the late Gnostic-style Protestant teachings of Jakob Boehme (Stoudt, 1968), Sophia as the Holy Spirit was said to be the bride of a wise man. Wisdom in this tradition was achieved by uniting with the inner Sophia to achieve an androgynous balance within. Such wisdom was then turned outward to enhance balance and movement in human affairs.

We also find Hokhna in the Hebrew Kabbalistic tradition as the penultimate wisdom out of ten diverse 'wisdom' qualities or mind qualities set forth at various levels between the ultimate God-head and the rest of creation. These ten qualities known as Sephiroth are depicted in the form of a mystical tree that represents the 'World of Union,' a kind of circulatory system wherein the process of life flows from divinity into the whole of creation and back again.

In ancient Greece it was the Muses who inspired and presided over all forms of thought. Miller (1986) interprets Plato to say, in twentieth-century terms, that the muses served a kind of therapeutic purpose, restoring an inner rhythm and harmony to the soul in
concordance with the outer rhythm and harmony of the cosmos as witnessed in the stars. As intermediaries between human affairs and the cosmic harmonies of heaven, the muses were available to those who practiced their chosen discipline in a contemplative manner: opening themselves up to energies existing beyond personal ambition. By developing a relationship with these energies, personified as female deities, one could unite with a source of wisdom greater than one's personal self, a wisdom synchronized with the heavenly rhythms of the stars and cosmos at large. Miller explains that the Muses performed a choral dance resonant with the 'image of the archetypal harmony reflected in the choral rounds of the stars' and he quotes Plato to show us that

we might behold the revolutions of Reason in the Heavens and make use of this spectacle for controlling the revolutions of the rational faculty that is within us.... For harmony, which has motions akin to the revolutions of the soul within us, has been given by the muses to him who makes use of the muses intelligently, not for the sake of irrational pleasure (as they now seem to be used) but as an auxiliary to the revolution of the soul within us, when it has lost its harmony, to restore it to its proper order and concord. And Rhythm, in turn, was granted to us by the same goddesses and for the same reasons, to restore the measure and grace that are lacking in most of us.

Plato, Timaeus 47c-e (translated and quoted in Miller, 1986, p. 29)

Steindl-Rast (1984), a contemporary Benedictine monk who also practices Zen, tells us that the Latin root of the word contemplation, *contemplari*, comes from the Roman augurs, professional seers who would mark off a *templum*, or an area in the sky, to read in the immutable order of the stars signs of patterns in the events below. He tells us that the 'Sacred order of the temple is merely the reflection of the sacred order above,' (p. 16) and explains that the *con* in *contemplari* implies bringing the two temples together. This corresponds with Eastern notions of contemplation as the primary way to bring together the tremendous potential of the un-manifest 'heaven' principle with the 'earth' principle to invoke prosperity and harmony.
Again, in traditional cultures of the East, the principle of wisdom as insight was often associated with a female deity or a feminine mode of consciousness. Insight has to do with taking in, or receptivity, hence its early association with female genitalia or the Hindu *yoni*. This receptivity is passive in the most positive sense, that is, an opening, a womb, a cosmic but fertile void, that receives all things and gives birth to all things. This void or opening can also represent a kind of perceptual purity that does not pervert or alter what it receives. The active or practical aspect of wisdom, on the other hand, has been traditionally associated with a masculine deity, often a war-like god, and the male mode of consciousness. Action implies penetrating a situation with energy to introduce an element of change. This is represented in the phallus or Hindu *lingum*.

The Sanskrit terms of Mahayana Buddhism, *prajna*, the insight of non-dual awareness, and *upaya*, skillful action, which follows this insight, acknowledge again these two aspects of wisdom, and are in this tradition said to be inseparable. In both Hindu and Buddhist tantric teachings and meditation practices, these two aspects of wisdom are symbolically joined as female and male deities in sexual union.

The *Tao* of ancient China, still practiced both in the East and West, also acknowledges feminine and masculine components or phases of wisdom. The wisdom of the *Tao* is found through uniting one’s being with the process of nature, which is understood to be complete in its flow or moving balance between quiet receptivity and energetic activity. These two aspects of nature and of human wisdom – *yin* the dark and receptive, and *yang* the light and active – are completely interdependent, like night and day. The process of their rise and fall has also been described traditionally as the phases of the moon or the crest and trough of a wave. This interdependent relationship is symbolized in the familiar T’ai-Chi-T’u or Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate, where light and dark embrace in the form of a circle with a tiny seed of darkness present in the light and a similar tiny seed of light present in the dark.
Perhaps wisdom is not knowledge in the ordinary sense of knowing something; rather, wisdom is a process. Wisdom is awareness. It is awareness of mind as an active principle linking all things through information pathways. Unlike information stored in a book, a computer or the way we tend to think that memories might be 'stored' in the brain, wisdom is never static. It is a living and moving process. Wisdom is a way, a way of knowing, a way of feeling, a way of perceiving, a way of acting and a way of being.¹⁴

Some hold that this way of wisdom, a way that has been practised and studied throughout the world, from a variety of cultural approaches, is a way of entering into the dance of life so that, in its highest form, there is no separation between the knower and the known, the perceiver and the perceived.

The knower and the known are one. Simple people imagine that they should see God, as if he stood there and they here. This is not so. God and I, we are one in knowledge.

Meister Eckhart¹⁵

I argue that this type of experience, generally thought of as a mystical one, wherein the dualistic separation between the knower and the known dissolves, is available to all of us as part of our everyday experience. The ground of wisdom, from this perspective, is the pre-existing unity of the perceiver and the perceived, the knower and the known.¹⁶

For most of us there is only the unattended Moment, the moment in and out of time, The distraction fit, lost in a shaft of sunlight, The wild thyme unseen, or the winter lightning Or the waterfall, or music heard so deeply That it is not heard at all, but you are the music While the music lasts.

T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*¹⁷

According to the wisdom literature of many of the world's literate cultures, the way of wisdom is the inherent birthright of every person. It is not something that needs to be implanted into each new generation through indoctrination. Nonetheless, latent wisdom
does need to be pointed out, cultivated and brought to fruition by teachers who are aware of it and nurture it within themselves. Teachers who work to embody wisdom in their own being, as well as in the educational environments they create, draw out wisdom from their students.

Goodness needeth not to enter into the soul, for it is there already, only it is unperceived.

_Theologia Germanica_ 18

The ground of elemental wisdom is unity consciousness. The term unity consciousness or unitive consciousness conjures up a sense of oceanic oneness, perhaps the transcendent wisdom experience of highly evolved sages and mystics. Or, at the opposite end of the spectrum, it may conjure up the experience of a newborn infant immersed in pre-developmental ignorance. Consciousness of diversity is the mode we experience in our daily lives and the view of the world as we generally know it: buzzing, blooming, and confusing. Wisdom lies in experiencing these two, unity and diversity, not as separate but as inseparable and simultaneous, two sides of the same coin.

Both wisdom as insight and as effective action would surely be enhanced if one had the ability to maintain both of these views, or modes of awareness, simultaneously. Personal accounts of people who have experienced an awareness of being immersed in a unitive universe (Bucke, 1969) seem to indicate that a sense of ultimate perspective, peace and timeless equanimity pervades one's being, as a result of such an experience. Out of this calm, I believe, one can establish a steady base from which to derive insight into the complex operations of diversity. Such non-dual wisdom is, I believe, the true basis for spontaneous and compassionate action.

Throughout history there have been unique individuals who have had extraordinary experiences wherein, accompanied by an overwhelming sense of well-being and what some might call feelings of universal love, they sense their own existence as not being
separate in any way from the cosmos and its pulsating energy, which is, they claim, the on­
going life of all beings in the universe.¹⁹

Accounts of such experiences are impressive, having a tendency to evoke in the
reader a glimpse of their intensity, and tend to spawn commentary and speculation. Some
accounts are the reports of individuals who suddenly found themselves in a mystical
experience without any training or practice, while others come from adept masters of
various mystical traditions. Reviewing such reports, from a cross-cultural perspective, may
help persuade the reader that there is a ground of elemental wisdom, or at least that there is
a body of wisdom literature that asserts that this is so.

One individual who claimed to have had such an experience was the Canadian
doctor Richard M. Bucke (1837-1901, see Bucke, 1969). While abroad visiting an English
city in the early spring of his thirty-sixth year, he had been reading the romantic poetry of
Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Browning and his favourite, Whitman, with two friends.
They parted at midnight and Bucke made his long way home in a hansom. After
contemplating the ideas, images and emotions of the night’s reading and conversation, he
enjoyed, for a brief moment, a quiet, peaceful and passive state of mind, when suddenly:

All at once I found myself wrapped in a flame-coloured cloud. For an
instant I thought of fire, an immense conflagration somewhere close
by in that great city; the next, I knew that the fire was within myself.
Directly afterward there came upon me a sense of exultation, of
immense joyousness accompanied or immediately followed by an
intellectual illumination impossible to describe. Among other things, I
did not merely come to believe, but I saw that the universe is not
composed of dead matter, but is, on the contrary, a living Presence; I
became conscious in myself of eternal life. It was not a conviction that
I would have eternal life, but a consciousness that I possessed eternal
life then; I saw that all (beings) are immortal; that the cosmic order is
such that without any peradventure all things work together for the
good of each and all; that the foundation principle of the world, of all
the worlds, is what we call love, and that the happiness of each and all
is in the long run absolutely certain. I learned more during the few
seconds during which the illumination lasted than in previous months
or even years of study, and I learned much that no study could ever
have taught. (Bucke, 1901, pp. 306-307)

Bucke was so moved by this experience that it altered the course of the rest of his
life and he wrote the book *Cosmic Consciousness* (1901) based on the insight that he had
gained in this experience. In this book Bucke examines the lives and writings or teachings
of some famous and some not-so-famous people who, according to his specific list of
criteria, have attained what he refers to as cosmic consciousness.

In this book, Dr. Bucke explains his theory that there are three distinct forms of
consciousness: simple consciousness possessed by the more highly evolved animals, self
consciousness, which is the achievement of humankind and our normal or habitual mode,
and lastly, cosmic consciousness, which according to Bucke is the mode experienced and
expressed by the great saints and sages of history but is also becoming more and more
available in general to all of us as time marches on. Some of the more famous people
examined by Bucke, who have, according to his notion, attained cosmic consciousness and
taught from that point of view, include Gautama, Jesus, Paul, Plotinus, Mohammed,
Dante, William Blake, Honoré De Balzac, Walt Whitman and Edward Carpenter.

Whether Bucke’s description and classification of consciousness is ultimately valid
or not is moot; however, his book has withstood the test of time, still finding a new
generation of readers in our age, serving as a straightforward introduction to the study of
consciousness and the ground of elemental wisdom.

William James, the seminal figure in the psychology of consciousness, who lived
and wrote around the turn of the century, had much to say concerning mystical states of
consciousness. In his famous Gifford lectures delivered at Edinburgh in 1901-1902, James
listed four characteristics of a mystical experience.

1. Ineffability: The handiest of the marks by which I classify a state of
mind as mystical is negative. The subject of it immediately says that it
defies expression, that no adequate report of its contents can be given
in words. It follows from this that its quality must be directly experi-
enced; it cannot be imparted or transferred to others. In this peculiarity mystical states are more like states of feeling than like states of intellect.

2. Noetic quality: Although so similar to states of feeling, mystical states seem to those who experience them to be also states of knowledge. They are states of insight into depths of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect.

3. Mystical states cannot be sustained for long. Except in rare instances, half an hour, or at most an hour or two, seems to be the limit beyond which they fade into the light of common day.

4. Passivity: ...the mystic feels as if his own will were in abeyance, and indeed sometimes as if he were grasped and held by a superior power. (James, 1902/1958, p. 293)

A little later on in the same passage James admits that he has had glimpses of such experiences himself, which have convinced him that

Our normal waking consciousness is but one special type of consciousness, while all about it parted from it by the filmiest of screens there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different. (1902/1958, p. 298)

Thus we have the image of our own perhaps haphazard and distracted state of mind giving way to a cosmic enlightening like that of Bucke, or the joyful reverie of Walt Whitman, if only we could pass through that 'filmiest of screens' that sets apart our normal state of consciousness from this sublime state of awareness.

Abraham Maslow's (1971) investigations into the lives of people who had experienced what he termed 'Peak Experiences' led him to isolate the following sixteen traits as after-effects:

1. more integrated, whole and unified;
2. more at one with the world;
3. as if he were at the peak of his powers, most fully himself;
4. graceful, without strain, effortless;
5. creative, active, responsible, self-controlled;
6. free of inhibitions, blocks, doubts, self-criticisms;
7. spontaneous, expressive, innocent:
8. creative, self-confident, flexible;
9. unique, individualistic;
10. free of past and future limits;
11. free of the world, free to be;
12. un-driven, unmotivated, non-wishing, beyond needs;
13. rhapsodic, poetic;
14. consumed, finished, closed, complete, subjectively final;
15. playful, good-humoured, childlike;
16. lucky, fortunate, grateful.

There are, it seems, a variety of what the transpersonal research psychologist Charles Tart (1969) and others have labelled altered states of consciousness. Although some of these are generally regarded as different levels of what might be considered spiritual experiences, it is essential to make a distinction. Gerald May (1982) distinguishes between altered states in which a sense of individual identity is maintained, what he calls self-defining experiences, and an experience which is characterized by a loss of self-definition.

In terms of understanding the ground of elemental wisdom, the most important characteristic of Bucke’s ‘Cosmic Consciousness,’ or what Wilber (1981a) calls ‘unity consciousness,’ and May (1982) calls the ‘unitive experience,’ is the loss of individual identity in an experience of being at one with the entire universe. During such an experience one’s identity as a separate individual melts into what Sufi mystics call ‘Supreme Identity.’

In these experiences, the artificial boundaries set up between self and environment fall away, and identity expands beyond the normal limits of the body to include the environment and its other inhabitants.

The ability to feel what others feel, or what Carl Rogers (1951) dubbed accurate empathy, can be seen as a limited degree and specially trained aspect of an awareness referred to by Wilber as no-boundary awareness. This experience of being-at-one transcends the normal dualistic experience of a perceiving subject and perceived object. Thomas Merton (1968) says it in this way:

Meanwhile, let us remind ourselves that another, metaphysical, consciousness is still available to modern man. It starts not from the
thinking and self-aware subject but from being, ontologically seen to be beyond and prior to the subject-object division. (p. 23)

Aside from the efforts of some pioneers such as Bucke, William James, Abraham Maslow and the transpersonal psychologists such as Charles Tart, Ken Wilber and others, this type of experience has, for the most part, been the business of what we tend to call in the West, religion. We must remember, however, that the experience is in itself primary and for the most part ineffable, while the attempts by religion or esoteric philosophy to capture the experience in words of doctrine, dogma or metaphysical speculation will never stand up, or compare with the naked (non-conceptual, ‘non-languaged’ unselfconscious) experience. Even the intermediary experiences engendered through cultural myths and embodied in ritual are ways of entering or approaching such experiences and should not be confused with the experience itself. Concerning this point, William James (1958) says:

Religious experience, in other words spontaneously and inevitably engenders myths, superstitions, dogmas, creeds and metaphysical theologies. But all these intellectual operations, whether they be constructive or comparative and critical, presuppose immediate experiences as their subject matter. (p. 36)

As we examine some of the various writings and statements from a few diverse religions and cultures throughout history, that attempt to describe the unitive experience or express some insight gained within such an experience, we must attempt to see beyond the cumbersome language of dogma, metaphysics, theology, metaphor and myth. As is indicated in a famous Zen saying, when a finger points to the moon we must recognize that it is the moon we are to look at and not the finger.

Perhaps the oldest continuously surviving tradition of wisdom teachings that deal with unitive consciousness and no-boundary awareness are those embodied in the esoteric traditions of India that centre on the practice of yoga.20

Indian Yoga is said to be a tree with many roots, for as it developed it became a repository for a great many diverse and ancient wisdom traditions. One historian of the
ancient yoga (Feuerstein, 1989) believes that it may have had its origins in early tribal shamanism. Shamans, who served their nomadic communities as both healers and priests, were well versed in the sacred arts of altering their awareness through various means, including monotonous drumming, chanting and dancing or through the ingestion of natural hallucinogenic substances. This hypothesis follows that as agricultural city-states grew up shamans were perhaps suppressed by the priests of the official agrarian religions and thus developed quiet methods for altering consciousness (yoga) instead of loud drumming and wild dances. Feuerstein also asserts that the shift from shamanism to yoga also corresponds to a general shift in consciousness that he purports is to have occurred at this time, that is, a shift from a primitive communal consciousness toward a more individuated self-awareness. Aside from these roots in prehistoric shamanism, Indian yoga has two distinct yet complementary sources in early Indian civilization, one being the early yogic practices of Indus Valley natives and the other the polytheistic mythos of the Vedas.

Thus, in one way or another the various streams of Indian spirituality were brought together in the famous central identification expressed in the Upanishads, tat tvam asi, 'That art Thou': the ultimate ground of all being (tat, 'That') and the eternal essence of one's own being (tvam, 'Thou') are one. In other words, one's being is, always has been, and always will be indivisible from the universal ground of being. That is to say, the transcendent spiritual ground of all existence is universally immanent. This unity is expressed in the Upanishads in various different ways:

Just as a man embraced by his dear wife knows nothing at all, outside or inside, so does the eternal life-monad [purusa], embraced by the supreme spiritual Self, know nothing at all, outside or inside.

Brhadāraṇyaka Upanishad, IV. 3.21

As rivers flow to their rest in the ocean and there leave behind them name and form, so the knower, liberated from name and form, reaches that divine person beyond the beyond.

Chandogya Upanishad, 6
The *tvat tvam asi* principle finds further expression down through the centuries in teachings of adept Hindu yogins. Perhaps its most pure and eloquent expression occurs in the teachings of Shankara, the most renowned teacher of the Advaita Vedanta or Hindu school of 'radical non-dualism.' Living in the early eighth century, C. E. Shankara was both a learned pundit and an accomplished yogin. He wrote an inspired commentary that collected together and systematized the teachings given in the Upanishads and the Bhagavad-Gita. This work, called the *Viveka-Chudamani* or 'Crest Jewel of Wisdom,' is filled with various expressions of the *tvat tvam asi* principle:

Caste, creed, family and lineage do not exist in Brahman. Brahman has neither name nor form, transcends merit and demerit, is beyond time, space and the objects of sense experience. Such is Brahman, and 'thou art That.' Meditate upon this truth within your consciousness...

Though One, Brahman is the cause of many. there is no other cause. And yet Brahman is independent of the law of causation. Such is Brahman, and 'thou art that.' Meditate upon this truth within your consciousness...

The truth of Brahman may be understood intellectually. But (even in those who so understand) the desire for personal separateness is deep-rooted and powerful, for it exists from beginningless time. It creates the notion, 'I am the actor, I am he who experiences.' This notion is the cause of bondage to conditional existence, birth and death. It can be removed only by the earnest effort to live constantly in union with Brahman. By the sages, the eradication of this notion and the craving for personal separateness is called liberation.

The Atman is that by which the universe is pervaded, but which nothing pervades; which causes all things to shine, but which all things cannot make to shine.

It is ignorance that causes us to identify ourselves with the body, the ego, the senses, or anything that is not Atman. He is a wise man who overcomes this ignorance by devotion to the Atman.23

Terms such as *Atman* and deities or divine principles such as Brahman make up the rich fabric that has conveyed and transmitted the wisdom of Hindu yoga for centuries.
However, once more we must remember that these terms in themselves are abstract symbols used as a means to point to an experience of reality beyond words, an experience of the ground of elemental wisdom.

Like discovering that you are nothing more than a tiny and formless drop in a vast and flowing ocean, experiencing the essence of one’s being as unified with the interpenetrating essence of the entire universe is, needless to say, a humbling experience. Such humility is not only a result of such a profound awakening; it has also been taught for centuries as the primary virtue or quality that one needs to cultivate in order to achieve such an awakening.

The wise sages of wisdom traditions throughout the world have taught the way of humility and selfless service as a path to wisdom. One of these great sages, Lao Tzu, uses the metaphor of water to reveal the wisdom and power of humility:

The highest form of goodness is like water.
Water knows how to benefit all things without striving with them.
It stays in places loathed by all men.
Therefore, it comes near the Tao.
In choosing your dwelling, know how to keep to the ground.
In cultivating your mind, know how to dive in the hidden deeps...; 

Lao Tzu’s way of wisdom also points to a unified ground of being as the mystery of a hidden essence that cannot be named:

Tao can be talked about, but not the Eternal Tao.
Names can be named, but not the Eternal Name.
As the origin of heaven-and-earth, it is nameless:
As “the Mother” of all things, it is nameable.
So, as ever hidden, we should look at its inner essence:
As always manifest, we should look at its outer aspects.
These two flow from the same source, though differently named;
And both are called mysteries.
The Mystery of mysteries is the Door of all essence.
He suggests that the aspiring sage merge with this unified ground of being through the humble and lowly way of the Tao. Having joined one’s own being to the way of all things, wisdom and compassionate action become the effortless action of non-action.

All-under-Heaven have a common Beginning.
This Beginning is the Mother of the world.
Having known the Mother,
We may proceed to know her children.
Having known the children,
We should go back and hold on to the Mother.
In so doing, you will incur no risk
Even though your body be annihilated....

Learning consists in daily accumulating;
The practice of Tao consists in daily diminishing.
Keep on diminishing and diminishing,
Until you reach the state of No-Ado.
No-Ado, and yet nothing is left undone./To win the world, one must renounce all./If one still has private ends to serve./One will never be able to win the world.

The objectives of Chinese philosophy, be it the Tao of Lao Tzu, Chuang Tzu and others, or the more conservative humanistic social philosophy of Confucianism is, for the most part, the cultivation of wisdom and the qualities of a sage whose insight and virtue benefit all. The finer points concerning the cultivation of wisdom and virtue were bantered about by the various different schools and the great sages of each period, down through the centuries.

One particularly flowering period of this rich wisdom tradition reached its peak during the Ming Dynasty in the movement now referred to as Neo-Confucianism, which was actually a hybrid mix of Confucianism, Taoism, certain Chan Buddhist ideas and, to a greater or lesser degree, the whole of Chinese philosophy up to that point. One great proponent of Neo-Confucianism was the warrior, scholar, sage, bureaucrat, and part-time hermit meditator Wang Yang-ming. In the following excerpt from his ‘Inquiry on the Great Learning,’ written in 1527, one year before his death, we can see a similar teaching to what
has been explained above: that wisdom arises from the experience of selflessness and a deep sense of unity with all things:

The great man regards Heaven and Earth and the myriad things as one body. He regards the world as one family and the country as one person. As to those who make a cleavage between objects and distinguish between the self and others, they are small men. That the great man can regard Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things as one body is not because he deliberately wants to do so, but because it is natural to the humane nature of his mind that he do so. Forming one body with Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things is not only true of the great man. Even the mind of the small man is no different. Only he himself makes it small. Therefore when he sees a child about to fall into a well, he cannot help a feeling of alarm and commiseration.... As soon as it is obscured by selfish desires, even the mind of the great man will be divided and narrow like that of the small man. Thus the learning of the great man consists entirely in getting rid of the obscuration of selfish desires in order by his own efforts to make manifest his clear character, so as to restore the condition of forming one body with Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things, a condition that is originally so, that is all. It is not that outside of the original substance something can be added. (Chan, 1963, pp. 659-660)

In the Christian contemplative traditions and in the writings of Christian mystics the non-duality of the ultimate Godhead is also proclaimed as the source of all virtue and wisdom. The extraordinary revelation of Christ was his proclamation that ‘I and the father are one,’ a similar revelation in Christian terms to the tat tvam asī, ‘Thou art That’ principle revealed in the Upanishads. Meister Eckhart, who was labeled a heretic by the Church for his teachings, says it in this way:

Thou must love God as not-God, not-Spirit, not-person, not image, but as he is, a sheer, pure absolute one, sundered from all twoness, and in whom we must eternally sink from nothingness to nothingness.

As long as I am this or that, or have this or that, I am not all things and I have not all things. Become pure till you neither are nor have either this or that; then you are omnipresent and, being neither this nor that, are all things.
Likewise, in the teachings of the mystical Sufis of the Islamic tradition, truth and wisdom are seen to proceed from the unitive experience, while confusion is the result of fundamental duality. This is explained in a simple Sufi saying by the great poet and mystic Kabir:

Behold but one in all things; it is the second that leads you astray.\textsuperscript{33}

The wisdom of each of these traditions from which I have quoted is based in a non-dual or unitive experience of the ultimate ground of all being. An intuition into the peculiarities of the vast diversity and interdependent relationships of experienced reality arises from this experience of unity, an awareness that transcends time and space, be it prolonged and profound, or merely an instantaneous glimpse.\textsuperscript{34}

This intuition\textsuperscript{35} is distinct from other kinds of knowledge in that it is not constructed or put together from various components. It arises complete already out of an experience of being one with the object of observation rather than through the experience of being a separate observer of something or someone. Good teachers are those who are able to observe their students dispassionately and objectively in order to assess their needs as well as being able to intuit their students' needs from a feeling of being one with their students, fully identifying with their struggles, their joys, and the very personal process by which each of them learn as unique individuals.

The idea of intuition in the Western philosophical tradition has a long and varied history. Knowing through direct contact with the environment and the process of experience, rather than knowing as mediated through concepts and mental categories, is a common theme in the theories of intuition espoused by Spinoza\textsuperscript{36} and Bergson.\textsuperscript{37} In the philosophies of both Spinoza and Bergson intuition is thought to be superior to intellect because it is immediate and uncomplicated by the constructive process of reason. Reason is abstract and removed from reality as an indivisible and fluid process. Elemental wisdom as I define it here occurs when we are not separate from reality as a fluid process.
My use of the term wisdom is more or less synonymous with the notion of intuition in Spinoza, and with Bergson’s notion of ‘pure perception’.

Elemental wisdom is primarily rooted in the body and, through the body, rooted in our deep and ongoing connection with our environment. By elemental, I mean wisdom that is rudimentary and primary like the forces of nature — powerful, simple, basic and essential. Through our physical presence, our organs of perception, our emotions, and our sense of being we take part in the ebb and flow of a greater situation than ourselves and our thoughts. Elemental wisdom is primary or primordial in that it is, by definition, primary to thought, pre-thought, pre-concept. It is what we know before we think.

By elemental, I am not particularly referring to the elements, as they are understood by the culture of contemporary science, in the periodic chart of elements. However, the more ancient system that views the cosmos as a dance of the elements — earth, water, fire, air and ether — does, as we shall see, have particular relevance to our understanding of wisdom, wisdom styles and the education of wisdom.

In the living wisdom traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, which use techniques of contemplation, yoga and meditation to uncover primordial wisdom, the transmission of wisdom is variously understood to occur all at once in a flash of profound insight, as well as gradually in an accumulative process of many years, and even many lifetimes, of deepening experiences and transformations through distinct developmental phases. Part of this transmission of wisdom, where the teacher points out to the student the wisdom that already exists within, has to do with the division of wisdom into five aspects. These five relate with the traditional elements common to Western thought: earth, water, fire, air and ether, which in the Buddhist system is simply referred to as space.

The teachings concerning these five elemental wiseoms, also associated with seasons, colours, landscapes, personality types and cognitive styles, can be conveyed in a conceptual way through the medium of words, as I am attempting to do in these pages; however, it is essential to point out that words are incapable of conveying the experience.
As mentioned earlier, words are like a finger pointing to the moon and, in fact, they are as far removed from the actual experience of wisdom as a finger is from the moon.

Sketching a preliminary definition of elemental wisdom, we have seen that wisdom is different from knowledge in that it implies a way of knowing rather than a what of knowing or the knowledge of something. Wisdom, like the Tao, involves respect for process and brings together as one the knower and the known. Wisdom also brings together what has been understood in such ancient traditions as the feminine mode of profound insight and the masculine mode of practical action. I have hinted at the treasure trove of teachings that have flourished for thousands of years in the ancient and sacred cultures both in the East and in the West. However, I do not wish to proclaim that ancient and sacred wisdom teachings are valid and appropriate to our time merely because they are ancient and sacred. We must examine these teachings critically from the perspective of our own culture to see if there are contemporary avenues of understanding which validate and reclaim these so-called perennial truths for ourselves in our own time.
CHAPTER 3 NOTES

1 Quoted in Ware (1980), p. 30. Gregory of Nyssa was a 4th-century mystic scholar and saint of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Further extracts of his writings can be found in Danielou and Musurillo (1962).

2 For a comprehensive definition of wisdom, see Rudolph (1987) and Blanshard (1967).

3 See Hamilton and Huntington (1961), or West (1964). A founding father of our Western conception of wisdom, Socrates seems to have had a revolutionary approach to understanding the psyche, making it the seat of knowledge and virtue. This approach was different from the pre-Socratics like Heraclitus and the Parmenians. Socrates was critical of his contemporaries and their philosophies based in opportunistic materialism. His idea of wisdom or Sophia had to do with ethical conduct. He advocated the Delphic motto 'know thyself,' demanding that introspection was the way to wisdom and virtue. He taught that it is only through not understanding what is 'good' that one acts in a way that causes harm to oneself or others. In this respect, his teachings were similar to those of the Buddha, who taught that all evil and suffering is a result of ignorance or not understanding a vaster vision of the truth of egolessness and the interconnected process of all things.

4 The wife of Yahwe has also been known as Shekinah, who represents wisdom, as well, and is conceived in kabbalist texts in sexual union with Yahwe, similar to the union of Shakti and Shiva in the Hindu tradition. She is also defined as the Glory of God, and rabbinic literature says her splendour feeds the angels and that she can castigate God for his vengefulness (Walker, 1988, p. 219) Kabbalist texts also say that she 'draws near whenever sexual intercourse occurs' (Pearson, 1991, p. 134). See also Hoffman (1981) and Ashlag (1969).

5 Throughout this chapter, and in the chapters concerning the elements as archetypes of wisdom, I will review some of the qualities and characteristics associated with gods and goddesses. By referring to wisdom as a deity, I in no way wish the reader to begin to think that wisdom is therefore disconnected from our normal experience or that we have to revive and invoke ancient goddesses in order to cultivate wisdom. However, an awareness of the quality of 'deity' altogether or a sacredness in our experience is what I advocate. Guenther (1989) says: 'The code term “deity” points to an aspect in experience that... is found nowhere else than in what has been discussed as body and mind. Specifically, “deity” refers to the unquestionable existentiality of the experiencer, not in a dualistic manner as interpreted by representational, objectifying thinking geared to the human individual's finiteness, but as it is experienced as a meaningful presence. This meaningfulness impresses itself on us through possible, though not necessarily objectifiable figures that vitalize feelings and perceptions that thereby tend to reach beyond themselves so as to become open to the very wonder and mystery of Being' (p. 80).

Buddhism, being non-theistic, does not posit any eternal principle such as a god or soul or an ineffable self; yet it makes use of symbolic 'archetypes' of wisdom in anthropomorphic forms to enliven those dormant aspects of our consciousness, which can connect us to the vast resources of wisdom within and without. Inviting sacred energy principles into our lives is a little like meeting people from another culture, as it allows us to extend beyond the boundaries of who we think we are.

6 Heq-Maat is said to be Mother of the creative words of power whereby the universe was formed (Walker, 1988, p. 205).

7 A cabalistic doctrine set forth in the Book of Splendor (Sefer ha-Zohar), published 1280, 'As numbered on the Tree, the Sephiroth are: (1) Kether or Keter Elyon, the Supreme Crown; (2) Hokhmah or Chokmah, Wisdom, the Beginning; (3) Bina or Binah, Intelligence, Understanding, the Supernal Mother of the Cosmic Womb; (4) Hesed or Chessed, Love, Mercy; (5) Geburah or Gevura, Power, Severity; (6) Rahamim, Compassion, or Tipareth (Tiferet), Beauty; (7) Nezah or Netzach, Endurance, Victory; (8) Hod, Splendour, Majesty; (9) Yesod, the Foundation; and (10) Malkuth or Malkut, the Kingdom, Earth identified with God's Spouse, the Shekinah' (from Walker, 1988, p. 103). For more about the Kabbalah, see Ashlag (1969) and Hoffman (1981).

8 Perhaps originating as three aspects of the goddess Mnemosyne (memory), the three muses were later multiplied by three to become nine. From the classical period the number of muses was standardized to nine, although groupings of three, analogous to the graces, were known, notably at Delphi and at Sicyon, while at Lesbos there was a cult of seven muses. The standard list of nine includes Calliope, the first of all in dignity and muse of epic poetry, then Clio, muse of history, Polyhymnia, muse of mime, Euterpe, muse of the flute, Terpsichore, muse of light verse and dance, Erato, muse of lyric
chorean poetry, Melpomene, muse of tragedy, Thalia, muse of comedy and Urania, muse of astronomy. From knowledge in history, mathematics, astronomy, to the eloquence of a persuasive philosophical argument, the muses were not just the divine inspirers of music, poetry, theatre, dance and epics. They were, in fact, a link between the divine and human worlds, the archetypal principles of aesthetic perfection and the divine style of communication through rhythmic verse and music that could join heaven and earth. They were the source for all poet art, and their significance points to the primacy of music or the Greek conception of *mousike* as an ultimate unification of all wisdom and artistic principles in classical thought, including, as James Milier (1986) tells us, 'visual harmony, aural concord, rhythmic grace, creative spontaneity, and profound insight into the origin of the visible and invisible gods' (p. 29). In our own time, which has become somewhat barren, diverted of such intermediary forces between the divine and human worlds, education in the arts is one of the few ways we still have for restoring this kind of harmony to the soul, and yet arts education is usually the first program to be cut when budgets are tight.

For anthropological anecdotes on the theme of sacred feminine wisdom, see Walker (1985).

These two aspects of wisdom — insight and action — though associated with sexual organs and functions from perhaps the dawn of agrarian societies or before, do not in any way imply any innate limitation of either sex. Rather, these sexual symbols are merely archetypal metaphors for the receptive and active aspects of wisdom. It seems to have been acknowledged, at least by the wise, that persons of either sex could take advantage of either mode of being and, ideally, balance the two wisdom aspects in life.

*Tao* literally means path, road, way, and is extended to imply principle, system, truth, natural law, reality, etc. Its usage in Chinese philosophy and folk wisdom is similar to the usage of the term *dharm* in Indian thought. Though every ancient Chinese school of thought taught its own way or *Tao*, only the Taoist school, which originates more or less in the teachings of Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu but includes a wide range of ancient Chinese folk wisdom, came to be known as Taoism in the first century B.C.E. because the *Tao* forms the centrepiece of this particular school. Chan (1963) tells us: 'Whereas in other schools *Tao* means a system or moral truth, in this school it is the One, which is natural, eternal, spontaneous, nameless, and indescribable. It is at once the beginning of all things and the way in which all things pursue their course. When the *Tao* is possessed by individual things, it becomes its character or virtue (te). The ideal life for the individual, the ideal for society, and the ideal type of government are all based on it and guided by it' (p. 136). Chan (1963) translates the works of Lao Tzu as well as some of Chuang Tzu and gives extensive commentary in notes and introductions. For a more complete version of Chuang Tzu, see Watson (1968).

Lao Tzu says in the *Tao Teh Ching*, chapter 42: *Tao* produced the one. The One produced the two. The two produced the three. And the three produced the ten thousand things. The ten thousand things carry the yin and embrace the yang, and through the blending of the material force (*ch'i*) they achieve harmony' (Chan, 1963, p. 160). *Ch'i* is the Chinese term for vital force, matter-energy, breath, etc.

I have not included a picture of the Supreme Ultimate here, as most people are familiar with it. However, it is reproduced as the top part of figure 10 in the chapter 'Elemental Systems.' It is interesting to note that Buddhism in China and Japan was profoundly influenced by the *Tao*, so much so that Zen today is often regarded as a hybrid of both Buddhism and Taoism. I have heard it said and agree myself that psychology is playing a similar role, if less profound, in the introduction and translation of Buddhism into Western culture. I think the Buddhism that will result in a few hundred years will have absorbed a lot of Western psychology into its language and methods, just as psychology has already borrowed from Buddhism (Wilber, 1980; Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Claxton, 1986; Wellwood, 1983).

These five are shorthand descriptions of the five wisdoms, which will later be described in some detail. A way of knowing is the vajra family wisdom, associated with the element of water; a way of feeling is the raja family wisdom, associated with the element of earth; a way of perceiving is the padma family wisdom, associated with the element of fire; a way of acting is the karma family wisdom, associated with the element of air and wind; and a way of being is the buddha family wisdom, associated with the element of space.

Huxley (1944), p. 19.

From the Buddhist perspective, Trungpa (1973) tells us that 'The Yogachara school was the first school of Buddhist thought to transcend the division between the knower and the known.' The Yogachara school, also known as the 'mind-only' (*citta-matra*) school, posited the 'indivisible union of
intelligence and phenomena.' As Trungpa explains, 'Thus there is no individual knower; rather everything is 'self-known.' There is only one mind, which the Yogacharyans called "self-luminous cognition," and both thoughts and emotions and people and trees are aspects of it... Thus its adherents explain confusion and suffering as springing from the mistaken belief in an individual knower. If a person believes that he knows the world, then the one mind appears to be split, though actually its clear surface is only muddied' (pp. 194-195). The term 'Yogachara' applied to this 'mind-only' school means practice of yoga and implies (Snellgrove, 1987, p. 97) 'that only by the practice of suitable yoga can mind which is impure in its conditioned or worldly state be realized as essentially pure in the final state of enlightenment.' This school was criticized by the Madhyamika school of Nagarjuna for tending to posit an overall state of reality as 'Mind.' The Madhyamika school tended to maintain a stance of negation and 'non-dwelling' to avoid positing any particular principle or quality to the Void (sunyata). See also Pabongka, Tharchin and Roach (1990), Sircng (1967), Jha (1973) and Kalupahana (1976).

17 Eliot (1943), lines 206-212 of 'The Dry Salvages.'

18 Theologia Germanica, quoted in Huxley (1944, p. 21), Winkworth's translation London, 1937. The Theologia Germanica is an anonymous but famous mystical treatise of the 14th century attributed to the Friends of God in Germany, a lay group who followed the somewhat heretical teachings of the great German mystic Meister Eckhart (c. 1260–c. 1327).

19 My first introduction to mysticism was through William Johnston's The still Point: Reflections on Zen and Christian Mysticism (1970), which I recommend as an elegant and thorough treatment of these two traditions. Suzuki (1957) and Merton (1961) also cover some of the same ground. Works by John of the Cross – Poems, The Ascent of Mount Carmel and The Dark Night of the Soul (see Peers, 1928, 1947, 1957) – as well as The Interior Castle and other works by Teresa of Avila (Peers, 1978), are classics describing the Christian mystical experience within the Carmelite tradition. The Eastern Orthodox Christian Church also has a rich mystical tradition. For a good introduction, see Ware (1979). The Teachings of Meister Eckhart are inspiring and very accessible, especially in the edition compiled by a current teacher of creation spirituality, Matthew Fox (see Fox, 1980). Fox has also edited version of the works of Hildegard of Bingen (Fox, 1987). Some other works that consider mystical experiences from a cross-cultural perspective are Eliade (1962), Almond (1982), Woods (1980) and Parrinder (1976). I find the poetry of Blake, Traherne, Whitman, Yeats and Eliot can evoke some qualities of mystical experiences. See Norton Anthology of Poetry (Allison et al, 1975), as well as Traherne (1910, 1934) and Eliot (1943). Pagliaro (1987) writes on the theme of redemption in Blake’s songs, and Kuebrich (1989) examines the work of Whitman as a kind of prophecy. The poetry of the Sufi mystic Jalal al-Din Rumi (Arberry, 1968) can also induce a glimpse of the mystical experience in the reader. Bucke (1901) gives many personal accounts of mystical experiences and compares them in an interesting format, and I think that Huxley (1944) also gives a good overview. For songs in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, see the Nalanda Translation Committee (1980). Sometimes I find, however, that too much reading of these strings of words attempting to express the ineffable can make my mind dull and narrow in focus, while watching sunlight dance on a lake in the morning or evening tends to refresh and enliven my senses.

20 The word ‘yoga’ is etymologically derived from the Sanskrit verbal root yuj, meaning ‘to bind together, to yoke.’ In terms of our topic, we might think of it as binding together as rejoining that which was torn asunder by dualistic consciousness. Generally, however, yoga refers to a body of spiritual values, attitudes, precepts and techniques all designed to pacify the mind and thus uncover self-transcendent wisdom which brings liberation from the fetters of worldly existence. As Feuerstein (1989) points out, the word ‘yoga’ can also mean union, and has been used at times in Sanskrit scriptures to denote the actual goal of yoga, that is, liberation to the eternally enduring unitive consciousness.

21 See Harner (1980); see also Halifax (1979).

22 Archeological evidence from the pre-Aryan Indus valley civilization suggests that various types of yoga were practiced by the native people of the Indian subcontinent in the second and third millennium B.C. The religion of the Aryan invaders or Vedas who came from the north was one thought to have been centred on sacrifice set within a polytheistic mythological world view. Much of mythical content of this early Vedic spiritual tradition is preserved in the ancient Rig-Veda or Vedic hymns, which according to the British Vedicist Jeanine Miller (1974) were envisioned and sung by Vedic bards or
rishis in a state of deep contemplation. Historians speculate concerning how these religious traditions, and others, intermingled, eventually giving rise to the Upanishads (800-500 B.C.E.), which seem to have been concerned with bringing a deeper meaning to sacrificial rites by joining these practices to the search for vidya, ultimate wisdom, the knowledge of sacred reality.

23 Quoted in Huxley (1944), pp. 5-7.

24 Lao Tzu (assumed to have lived in the 6th century B.C.E.), as a great teacher of the way of humility and self-effacement, seems to have been very successful at covering his own tracks, to the extent that some scholars have wondered if he existed at all. The name Lao Tzu itself can be read in Ancient Chinese as simply ‘old wise man’ or ‘old philosopher.’ Lau (1963) tells us that during the golden age of Chinese thought known as ‘the hundred schools’ there was a genre of literature with such titles as ‘elder’ and ‘old man of mature wisdom’ and that the Tao Teh Ching, also referred to in Chinese as the Lao Tzu, may be in fact an anthology of wise sayings typical of that era compiled by an editor or a series of editors. Nonetheless, according to the Records of the Historian (Chan, 1963, p. 138), there was a man known as Lao Tzu, a native of Ch’u (in modern Honan Province) with the family name of Li. It also reports that he was an official historian and keeper of the imperial archives, that Confucius visited him to receive instruction in certain rites and rituals, and that he was indeed the author of the famous Book of Five Thousand Characters (as the Tao Teh Ching is also known, despite the fact that it is, in fact, slightly longer than that). The story goes, according to Lau (1963, p. 9), that upon retirement Lao Tzu left Ch’u by way of a mountain pass and that the keeper of the pass, knowing of his wisdom, asked: ‘as you are about to leave the world behind, could you write a book for my sake.’ Lao Tzu complied with the request, writing the eighty-one short chapters, after which he disappeared into the mists on the other side of the pass. Some of the mystery surrounding Lao Tzu and the discrepancies around the dates of events in his life which vary from his alleged meeting with Confucius in 518 B.C.E. to reports of his son serving as a general to king Wei in 273 B.C.E. may have to do with his practice of Taoist longevity techniques which allowed him to live, some reports claim, as long as one hundred and sixty to two hundred years or more. Because of the multiple meanings of most Chinese characters and the ambiguity and richness of the original, which allows for a wide variety of interpretations, translations of the Lao Tzu abound. Lau tells us that prior to 1963 there were already over thirty English translations. Since then there have surely been many more. I have chosen the translation by Wu (1990), apparently a favourite of Thomas Merton’s. Some other good translations and renditions include Waley (1958), accurate and scholarly but cumbersome; Byrner (1962), liberal and fresh; Lau (1963), which has an informative introduction and appendix; Chan (1963), with extensive notes; Schmidt (1975), a German metaphysical version; and Feng and English (1972), with photography and calligraphy. I also like the rendering that Heider (1985) made for teaching classes at the Human Potential School of Mendocino, California. Barton (1991) contemplates the teaching method of Lao Tzu, imagining him as the model civil servant and the founder of an unacknowledged lineage of ‘silent servants slipping in and out of the halls of power, barely noticed yet curiously essential to the art of government.’ And the way he founded this underground order of organizational altruists was through, as Barton tells us, ‘writing a series of anonymous civil service memoranda on the subject of how best to run the country by appearing not to run it at all’ (pp. 19-21).


26 Lao Tzu, Chapter 1, translated by Wu (1990), p. 1. Chan (1963) tells us that ‘While ancient Chinese philosophical schools differed in many respects, most of them insisted on the correspondence of names and actualities. They all accepted names as necessary and good. Lao Tzu, however, rejected names in favour of the nameless. This, among other things, shows the radical and unique character of Taoism. To Lao Tzu, Tao is nameless and is the simplicity without names, and when names arise, that is when the simple oneness of the Tao is split up into individual things with names, it is time to stop.’ My own nameless experience as a small boy perched on the sandstone rocks degenerated first into my secret names then into the confusion of the myriad of things. Now if I could only stop and return to the undivided Tao, we all might benefit.

27 Lao Tzu, Chapter 52, translated by Wu (1990), p. 75.

28 Lao Tzu, Chapter 48, translated by Wu (1990), p. 71. This seems to me to be the supreme advice for teachers who need to learn first and foremost how to give up their own agenda, and pay attention to the natural unfolding development of their pupils. This is a very difficult thing to learn. Chang (1963) tells us that non-action (wu-wei) is the most important virtue in the Taoist way of life. He says non-action
does not mean 'literally "inactivity" but rather "taking no action that is contrary to Nature" -- in other words, letting Nature take its own course.'

29 Comparing the Tao of Lao Tzu with Confucianism, Chan (1963), who seems to be more or less a Confucianist himself, says: 'Confucianism emphasizes social order and an active life; Taoism concentrates on individual life and tranquillity, thus suggesting that Taoism plays a secondary rôle. But, in reality, by opposing Confucian conformity with non-conformity and Confucian worldliness with transcendental spirit, Taoism is a severe critic of Confucianism. In its doctrines on government, on cultivating and preserving life, and on handling things, Taoism is fully the equal of Confucianism' (p. 136).

30 Chan is the Chinese precursor to Japanese Zen Buddhism; see Chan (1963) and Chen (1973).

31 A 13th-century German mystic, Meister Eckhart, taught mystical theology in the German vernacular to anyone that would listen, breaking with the strong traditions of hierarchy, privilege, mystery and authority in the medieval Catholic Church. His teachings are available in English translations in three different, fairly recent publications: Fox (1980) with contemporary commentary by Matthew Fox, Colledge and McGinn (1981) and Walshe (1980).

32 Quoted in Huxley (1944), pp. 32, 107.

33 Quoted in Huxley (1944), p. 10.

34 For further insights into unity and duality in religions, see Eliade (1962), Smith (1976) and Watts (1963).

35 Our word 'intuition' comes from the Latin intuito derived from intueri, which means to look at attentively with astonishment or admiration, also to gaze and to contemplate or to pay close attention. See Westcott (1968) for explorations into some of the psychological perspectives on intuition. Vaughan (1979) gives some practical suggestions and examines methods for the cultivation of intuition.

36 Spinoza (1632-1677), a Dutch Jew expelled from the synagogue for his unorthodox philosophy, clearly differentiated between the functions of reason and intuition. Intuition he saw as superior because it leads to knowledge of essence, that is, the essence of any particular issue or principle under investigation. Intuition brings knowledge of ultimate truth, whereas reason, for him, develops a knowledge of the abstract. For him the two are antithetical, both in what they know and in the process of how they come to know it. Spinoza held that intuition arises directly and immediately complete, without the use of prior knowledge or any step-by-step process like that of reasoning. While reason can know facts, intuition is knowledge of experience outside the realm of discrete facts. Spinoza saw a relationship or kind of dance between reason and intuition, despite their being antithetical modes of knowing. Although Spinoza understood intuition to be always available, only minor intuitions were possible without the prior exercise of reason. Intuition for Spinoza was not a direct consequence of reason. However he did find, in his personal experience, that intuition on the grand scale seemed to occur when he would exhaust the use of reason, bringing him to a point where reason was abandoned and intuition could suddenly dawn. This theme of wearing reason down so that intuition can shine through is also prevalent in the koan practice of the Rinzei school of Zen Buddhism. For Spinoza, intuition was a special and mystical knowledge, knowledge of the supernatural and knowledge of God. Intuition could bring a person into direct contact with ultimate reality, which for Spinoza was a unified whole or God. Such a God for Spinoza does not exist in parts and therefore can never be broken down to be examined in an analytical fashion. Spinoza opposed the mind-body dualism of Descartes as well as any dualism between God and the created world. Intuition for Spinoza was a blessed experience and was accompanied by a sense of joy in an awareness of universal harmony and a sense of conviction in this as a communion with the ultimate truth. Elwes (see Spinoza, 1951/1883) has translated Spinoza's chief works in two volumes. I have found Parkinson (1954) a useful guide to understanding Spinoza on intuition, as well as Westcott (1968), who has a brief but useful section summarizing intuition in Spinoza's thought. Spinoza never made a living from writing philosophy, turning down an appointment to teach at a prestigious German university because he felt that it might compromise his independence as a thinker. Instead, he made his living by grinding and polishing lenses, an activity that perhaps gave him ample opportunity to contemplate the metaphysics of seeing clearly.

37 Teaching in Paris during the first part of our century, Henri Bergson (1859-1941) elaborated an evolutionary and holistic philosophy that became quite popular with the informed public and the avant garde intelligentsia of his time, as it shared some of the same insights that were being expressed in the
revolutionary world of modern art in schools such as Cubism in painting (see Chipp, 1968, chapter IV) and in the stream of consciousness novels of writers like Proust (1981), Joyce (1986) and Woolfe (1976, 1977). In general, however, other philosophers have been critical of Bergson (see Russell, 1914). Bergson's view of intuition is based in the assertion of a prime reality, 'the perpetual happening' as he called it, that is characterized by constant change, movement and evolution in a dynamic flux of complex and unpredictable interactions. For Bergson, it is our intellect and our tendency to freeze-frame this dynamic flux into snapshots, chopping it up into manageable units, imposing what he calls 'patterned immobility,' that prevents us from intuiting truth and ultimate reality. The cosmological flow envisioned, or should I say experienced, by Heraclitus in his famous analogy of the river may have been similar in many ways to Bergson's 'perpetual happening.' Bergson believed that we could cultivate our intuition by freeing ourselves from the restraints of calibrated time, reason and logic. He believed, however, that this takes considerable mental effort. He understood the process of the artist as ideally an intuitive one, whereby an artist could fully identify with the object she wished to represent. Bergson also wrote of a special kind of intuition known as 'pure perception.' This direct and uncomplicated experience of immediate sensory events puts one in touch with the perpetual happening, so that reality is lived, rather than frozen as it is by the intellect. See Bergson (1949, 1960, 1975, 1988). Also Westcott (1968) gives a brief summary of Bergson's ideas on intuition which I have found helpful.

By living wisdom tradition I am referring to the notion of lineage as a direct line of interconnectedness between master and disciple, teacher and student that can be traced back for more than two thousand five hundred years, back to the historical Buddha Sakyamuni along any one of many lines of direct transmission, each of which can be mapped out somewhat like a family tree. This notion of lineage implies that the awakening of intuitive wisdom happens only as a result of a very personal relationship between teacher and student and cannot happen from mere study of the words alone. The authenticity of various lineages has long been a subject of debate in Tibet and in the early Tantric Buddhism of India (see Snellgrove, 1987, pp. 26-46, 485-87). In Tibet, as in the rest of the world, political power, wars and fierce enmity have at times been justified by autocratic rulers who define themselves in opposition to other schools and lineages by clinging to obscure philosophical points and esoteric doctrine. This brand of negativity can occur in any tradition. However, within a healthier environment of ecumenical pluralism and respect, each individual lineage develops a particular style, emphasis and focus to better serve a public of diverse psychological, spiritual and educational needs.

For a description of this process of initiation into the five wisdom principles, see Trungpa (1981).
Chapter 4
Ecologic, Holistic Education and Teacher Training

• Seeing the luminous blue marble • I am the rain forest • Despair and empowerment work • Own the pain • Am I my pancreas? • I am just a swinging door • Don't punctuate the flowing circuit • Don't make mind waves • Don't propagate epistemological error • The times they are a changin' • Nature, she will not be dominated • Overthrow the arrogant C.E.O. within • Down with scientism • Teachers are artists • Who would ever try to predict and control the primordial elements? •

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The creator and Creation cannot be separated. The two of necessity become intimately interfused and evolve together in a relation of mutual interdependence. Thus, what destroys, degrades or enhances one does the same to the other.

(Roger Sperry, 1985a, p. 26)

I think that one of the most powerful images of our time is the image of the earth as seen from outer space. The image of our home as a speck of dust in one corner of an inconceivably expansive universe, the image of this blue and green living jewel laced with swirling white rising over the barren landscape of the moon will forever change the way we think about ourselves as human beings. Seeing what we normally experience as a vast and complex world containing the entire diversity of life and human experience as a single luminous blue marble emblazons in our minds the concrete reality of our interdependence and arouses at the same time a spontaneous feeling of compassion as we feel drawn to nurture and protect this living globe.¹

Contemplation of this image might be thought of as an initiation into a new way of thinking, the ecological thinking that is an imperative of our survival. It becomes obvious that we form one family, one body, and that any imbalance in one place will necessarily

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cause an imbalance somewhere else, setting off a chain reaction of disaster. The ecological nightmares of nuclear and toxic wastes, everyday pollution, rain forest devastation, the wholesale murder of species, as well as the human suffering of famine, sickness, and war, when viewed on television from the easy chair in our climatically-controlled living rooms become merely unreal images which do not affect us. However, ultimately, none of these are ever just localized phenomena that can be cut out like a cancer or cured by a multi-billion-dollar shot in the arm. These are symptoms of a greater illness, a systemic illness, a planetary illness. The denial of this awareness, the erecting of boundaries defended by war and aggression, the imbalance of wealth fueled by greed, and the short-sighted economies that thrive on waste and breed toxic pollution, these tendencies and ways of thinking that drive them cause sickness and despair in the entire world body.  

In an essay entitled ‘The Ecological Self: Post Modern Ground For Right Action’ Joanna Macy (1990) tells us that when she asked John Seed, director of the Rainforest Information Centre in Australia, how he managed to overcome despair and sustain the struggle against the giant lumber interests, he said, ‘I try to remember that it’s not me, John Seed, trying to protect the rainforest. Rather I am part of the rainforest protecting myself. I am that part of the rainforest recently emerged into human thinking’ (p. 37).  

Such a complete identification with the rainforest is the essence of ecological thinking and also forms the foundation of what I mean by elemental wisdom. Elemental wisdom involves an alertness to the naturally existing interconnections with one’s environment. The Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess (1988) has coined the term ‘deep ecology’ to refer to this profound shift from regarding ourselves in the world to regarding the world as ourselves. Deep ecology is a way of being and a way of perceiving that he contrasts with ‘shallow environmentalism,’ a band-aid approach that applies technological solutions within the narrow-minded context of short-term human goals.  

Macy, Nauss, and Seed emphasize that transpersonal identification with suffering outside our own is categorically different from exhortations to altruism which involve a
sense of sacrifice and moralizing. Macy (1990) warns 'please note: Virtue is not required for the emergence of the ecological self!'

What is it that allows for this dramatic shift from a perspective that is organized around the survival needs of myself as an individual to one that regards all beings and the earth as one body? Macy (1990), a Buddhist practitioner, is also trained in cybernetics and general systems theory, and she combines these two in her work with community development and social reform. Speaking of the 'Cybernetics of the Self' she explains that:

The findings of twentieth-century science undermine the notion of a separate self, distinct from the world it observes and acts upon. As Einstein showed, the self’s perceptions are shaped by its changing position in relation to other phenomena. And these phenomena are affected not only by location but, as Heisenberg demonstrated, by the very act of observation. Now contemporary systems science and systems cybernetics go yet further in challenging old assumptions about a distinct, separate, continuous self, showing that there is no logical or scientific basis for construing one part of the experienced world as “me” and the rest as “other.” (p. 39)

In Mahayana Buddhist philosophy there is a practice of searching in different parts of the body to locate that which we refer to as the self. Applying this kind of questioning, we can momentarily glimpse no-self.

The smallest cell in our body can be seen as having its own integrity as a self-regulating open system, a tiny unit of life. Since our bodies are dependent upon a constant flow of matter, energy, and information through our breathing, eating, acting, thinking, and communicating, they too exist as units of life. Though I may usually identify with what Alan Watts has called the 'skin encapsulated ego' my being within my environment is not unlike that of the tiny cell within my body; both exist within a web of life.

In Zen meditation one may cultivate an awareness of this no-self by paying attention to the immediate experience of one’s body and the sensation of the breath as it goes in and out.
If you think 'I breathe,' the 'I' is extra. There is no you to say 'I.'
What we call 'I' is just a swinging door which moves when we inhale and when we exhale. (Suzuki, 1970, p. 29)

The basic philosophy underlying Buddhist meditation is that if you pay attention to experience as it is, there is no other wisdom necessary beyond this. By sitting quietly with one's attention on the breath one experiences the truth of what Bateson (1972) explains in the language of systems theory:

The total self-corrective unit which processes information, or, as I say, 'thinks' and 'acts' and 'decides,' is a system whose boundaries do not at all coincide with the boundaries either of the body or of what is popularly called the 'self' or 'consciousness.' (p. 319)

What Bateson and systems theory makes abundantly clear is that mind is not trapped in the skull:

The self, as ordinarily understood, is only a small part of a much larger trial-and-error system which does the thinking, acting and deciding. This system includes all the informational pathways which are relevant at any given moment to any given decision. The 'self' is a false reification of an improperly delimited part of this much larger field of interlocking processes. (p. 331)

The practice of meditation is a path toward realizing this ultimate reality constantly as part of everyday life. Shunryu Suzuki:

True understanding is that the mind includes everything; when you think that something comes from outside it means only that something appears in your mind. Nothing outside yourself can cause any trouble. You yourself make the waves in your mind. If you leave your mind as it is it will become calm. This mind is called big mind. ... Big mind experiences everything within itself. (1970, p. 35)

This is the foundation of elemental wisdom: that mind is infinitely interconnected.

What does this mean for the teacher in training who will eventually be faced with a group of students? It means one should not become swallowed up in the pain of others, so that one is rendered impotent, but rather naturally feel the peculiar qualities and intensities of experience of those around one, and help them overcome their struggles themselves.
The activity of big mind is to amplify itself through various experiences. In one sense our experiences coming one by one are always fresh and new, but in another sense they are nothing but a continuous or repeated unfolding of the one big mind. With big mind we accept each of our experiences as if recognizing the face we see in the mirror as our own. (Suzuki, 1970, pp. 35-36)

Psychologies based on the assumptions that mind and nature are fundamentally separate propagate an epistemological error which lies at the root of orthodox Western psychology and must surely be questioned if we want to pursue a psychology that will help bring ecological balance and peace in future generations.  

Capra (1982), in his work The Turning Point: Science, Society, And the Rising Culture, borrows his title from a hexagram in the Chinese book of wisdom, the I Ching. Capra’s thesis, rooted in the Taoist philosophy expressed in the I Ching, is that Western civilization stands at the brink of a profound cultural transformation. Citing the historical theories of cultural transition from authors such as Toynbee (1972), Spencer, and especially Sorokin (1937-41), Capra argues that the materialistic world view of scientific reductionism together with patriarchal politics, the economies of conspicuous consumption, competitive capitalism, and industrial and technological exploitation are all characterized by a blind faith in rational linear thinking that is beginning to break down as more and more of our population begin to see that these severely unbalanced approaches are threatening to become our nemesis. Capra asserts that an alternative world view which acknowledges the interconnectedness of all things is rising in a wide diversity of fields of human endeavor.

Other authors have presented similar arguments. Feminist literature has indicated the grave consequences of our imbalanced world view. Carolyn Merchant (1980) says:

In investigating the roots of our current environmental dilemma and its connections to science, technology and the economy, we must re-examine the formation of a world-view and a science which, by reconceptualizing reality as a machine rather than a living organism, sanctioned the domination of both nature and women. The contributions of such founding ‘fathers’ of science as Francis Bacon, William
Harvey, René Descartes, Thomas Hobbes and Isaac Newton must be re-evaluated. (p. xvii)

From the Jungian perspective, (Jung 1933; 1968a; Pearson, 1991) the materialistic world-view represents an exaggeration and distortion of the Masculine Archetype to the exclusion of the Feminine. The tendency to dominate nature to keep physical, emotional and spiritual expressions under control, to compete for economic and social supremacy are understood as an unhealthy exaggeration of tendencies in the immature masculine archetype. The receptive, nurturing, and cooperative tendencies and an awareness of the interdependence of all things connected with the mature feminine archetype have been suppressed.

Colin Ross (1991), a clinician and researcher working with people who suffer from multiple personality disorder, writes in the journal *Dissociation* that Western culture has promoted the 'executive ego self.' 'A cultural dissociation barrier has been created and reinforced, the purpose of which is to keep other part-selves suppressed, out of contact and communication with the executive self, and relegated to second class-status in the mind.' He describes the executive ego as arrogant, totalitarian, overly logical, mathematical, and anti-intuitive, and he explains that its dominance is reflected in the world at large. For Ross, our social structures are a mirror of our inner life. Apartheid and white supremacist views reflect these inner relationships. 'Other races are viewed by the dissociated ego as primitive, dangerous, ignorant, superstitious, and existing primarily for the use of the white race' just as other part-selves are suppressed and feared by the executive ego. Likewise, the pollution of our planet occurs because the dissociated executive self sees the body as its property.

disempowering over-reliance on the scientific modes of reductionistic, linear, and rational thinking which have dominated the West, and now increasingly the world. Turner (1990) argues that the modern era has been dominated by a rigid belief in what he calls the religion of materialism. This is a religion practiced through economic activity which finds its highest triumphs in technological wizardry. Turner and others (Smith, 1982; Griffin & Smith, 1989) present postmodern thought as an alternative. Postmodern thought in philosophy, psychology, sociology, religion, art, science, politics and culture attempts to re-enliven our appreciation for a sense of the sacred through understanding that the implications of contemporary science, are not incompatible with more ancient views which held that the material and the spiritual exist within a continuum and are inseparable. 6

The revival of the Goddess as a meaningful presence in contemporary culture seems also to herald a fresh approach to the way we perceive ourselves and the world around us as Gadon (1989) explains:

The Goddess has reappeared in our midst in the late twentieth century as a symbol of the healing that is necessary for our survival, a transformation of consciousness that holds promise of a renewal of our culture. The emerging consciousness is pluralistic. There are many pathways that reconnect the personal to the political, the spiritual, and the sexual. There are no authorities, hierarchies, or gurus. Empowerment comes from within, form the connection to the life force. (p. 376)

This connection to the life force is available to teachers through contemplative training in elemental wisdom. Though the notions which are the roots of elemental wisdom as I describe it are for the most part derived from ancient ways of thinking these ways of thinking are re-emerging in our time in a new way. The breakdown of values and loss of meaning which has been a predominant theme throughout most of the twentieth century has provoked a re-evaluation which Whitmont (1982) describes in this way:

We seek new forms of self-validation and of relating to our emotional and instinctual urges. Yet paradoxically these new ways require a
retrieval of old, seemingly discarded and repressed modes of functioning. The magical, mythological, and feminine ways of dealing with existence left behind thousands of years ago must now be reclaimed by consciousness.7

Ron Miller, the founder and former editor of the Holistic Education Review,8 wrote an editorial in the Fall 1990 issue entitled 'We Need a Holistic Teacher Training Program.' In it he says that such a program would conceive of teaching as an art rather than a technical science. In such a program, he goes on to say 'the emphasis would not be on techniques so much as on self development.' 'Teachers would cultivate their own artistic qualities, sensitivity, creativity, spontaneity, responsibility, compassion, reverence, and sense of wonder.' Furthermore, he envisions that in such a program teachers would 'major' in a contemplative or meditative practice. Miller also notes that training in learning styles should also be part of a good holistic teacher training program.

In my view, however, most of what is available on learning styles has been derived from psychological thinking based on the assumption that mind and nature are fundamentally separate. These learning style theories and methods continue to propagate a materialistic world view and oppressive reductionistic tendencies of labeling, prediction and control which are antithetical to the holistic approach to education. Before moving on to examine some of these learning style theories, let us first explore some of the cultural and historical roots that formed the assumptions which I claim distort these theories. Let us see how Western thought has gradually divested itself from what Berman (1981) refers to as enchantment.
James Lovelock (1979) has proposed that the earth itself is a living system. From extensive research into the composition of gases in the atmosphere, Lovelock has found the occurrence of very unlikely proportions of gases in a highly complex and delicate equilibrium. The maintenance of this equilibrium is dependent upon an overall regulatory process that involves the entire range of life on earth functioning together in what can be conceived of as a single organism to maintain the conditions necessary for its survival. Lovelock has called this organism Gaia after the Greek notion of Mother Earth. In his words: 'We have defined Gaia as a complex entity involving the earth's biosphere, atmosphere, oceans, soil; the totality constituting a feedback or cybernetic system which seeks an optimal physical and chemical environment for life on this planet' (p. 11). The biologist Thomas (1975) explains that the most accurate analogy for describing the biosphere of the earth is that of a single cell: 'It [the earth] has the organized, self contained look of a living creature, full of information, marvelously skilled in handling the sun' (p. 170).

2 Lemkow (1990), an economist who worked for 29 years for the United Nations Secretariat consulting with developing countries, has spent the last 18 years in private studies developing a comprehensive and practical holistic philosophy which integrates the knowledge that professional disciplines have fragmented. Her synthesis draws together the mystical spirituality of the perennial philosophy with ideas from diverse sources such as the global peace movement, ecology and systems theory to form a future vision for social, political and economic reform on both local and global levels. She closes her book, The Wholeness Principle: Dynamics of Unity within Science, Religion and Society, by saying: 'Notwithstanding that the impulse toward wholeness has been eclipsed by separative tendencies in a large and powerful portion of human society, it has always been present and viable. Our own neglect of this dynamic only ensured that sooner or later we would re-encounter it all the more forcibly' (p. 298).

3 How does one achieve such a profound shift in the way one regards oneself in relation to the environment? Macy and her colleagues have travelled widely in North America, Europe, Asia and Australia engaging tens of thousands of people in what she calls 'Despair and Empowerment Work,' a process using contemplative and meditation techniques, as well as lecture, discussion and direct action to, as she explains, 'overcome the numbing and powerlessness that result from suppression of painful responses to massively painful (global) realities.' By encouraging people to 'own the pain' of our collective planetary suffering, she has found that they are able to make the shift from 'sentiments relating to one's personal welfare' to a 'more encompassing identity inseparable from the web of life in which we are as intricately interconnected as the cells in a larger body' (Macy 1990).

4 Charles Tart, in an article entitled 'Some Assumptions of Orthodox Western Psychology' (1975), lays out more than 75 implicit assumptions that underlie conventional psychology and contrasts them to a different set of assumptions that underlie what he calls 'spiritual psychologies.' For Tart, 'spiritual psychologies' refers to the time-honoured wisdom of traditions as diverse as Vedantic Hindu yoga, Christian mysticism, Buddhist psychology and the Shamanistic traditions of native cultures world over. He makes it clear that he is not judging the implicit assumptions of orthodox Western psychology as wrong and those of the spiritual psychologies as right. Rather, he makes the argument that implicit assumptions, not subject to conscious scrutiny, exert immense power over our thinking and it only makes good science, and good sense, to call these into question. He also states, from his own experience in the field, that the vast majority of academic psychologists make these assumptions without acknowledging them. He tells of psychologists who persist in making these assumptions, in some cases even when their experimental evidence indicates that such assumptions should be questioned. I believe that assumptions such as these listed by Tart distort our view of the natural educational process and can be seen as a significant cause behind much of the distress and discord in our educational culture. An example of a few assumptions from Tart's list expressed in headline form are: (1) The universe is dead and life is seen as an accidental development of lifeless physical forces. We exist in relative isolation from our surrounding environment, we are essentially independent creatures. (3) We can understand the physical universe without understanding ourselves. (4) A person who spontaneously goes into altered states of consciousness is probably mentally ill. (5) Personality is a relatively unified structure in normal adults. (6) Reasoning is the highest skill possessed by our species Information or knowledge exists in isolation from the person who has it. (8) Psychological suffering is bad and should be avoided. Le Shan and Margenau (1982) also examine what they find to be the faulty assumptions of contemporary psychology. In particular, they explain how rigid beliefs in quantification, linear cause and effect and mechanistic models have structured our understanding of mind in a very limiting
and potentially destructive manner. Grof (1985), with his extensive clinical experience in developing psychotherapeutic methods for healing through altered states of consciousness, argues that such transpersonal experiences contradict the principles of the classic Newtonian scientific paradigm which academic psychologists, for the most part, still tend to cling to in order to give psychology a place in the sun (of government and corporate funding) as a legitimate science. Grof insists that if psychology is to serve the needs of our time it must undergo a radical paradigm shift equal to the shift from Newtonian physics to Quantum physics. One thing that this would mean in psychology is a shift from a limited psychology of the personal realms into an expanded psychology of multiple states of consciousness, interdependent systems and transpersonal realms of development. For an overview of transpersonal psychology, see Frager (1989).

One of the basic Confucian classics and also a favourite text for the Taoists, the I Ching, Book of Changes grew out of the ancient practice of divination. The text itself is very cryptic, leaving it open to multiple interpretations. Divided into texts and commentaries this classic has inspired hundreds of Chinese thinkers to write their own commentaries, and Chan (1963) tells us that 'philosophically speaking, it has exerted more influence than any other Confucian classic.' The text includes the 64 hexagrams used for divination and the judgements on them. The hexagrams are formed by combining the eight trigrams in every possible top and bottom combination. The trigrams are formed by combining three lines stacked one upon the other. Each individual line is either divided or undivided, representing yin and yang respectively. Chan tells us that 'tradition has ascribed the eight trigrams to the legendary Fu-shi, the 64 hexagrams to King Wen (1171-1122 B.C.E) and the two texts to him or to the Duke Chou (died 1094 B.C.E.) and the "ten wings" (commentaries) to Confucius.' He tells us that most modern scholars reject this attribution but do not agree on when and by whom the book was produced. Chan says 'Most probably it is a product of many hands over a long period of time from the 5th or 6th century B.C.E. to the 3rd or 4th century B.C.E.' (p. 262). Capra (1982, p. 5) quotes from the I Ching commentary on the hexagram 'The Turning Point': 'After a time of decay returns the powerful light that has banished returns. There is movement, but it is not brought about by force.... The movement is natural, arising spontaneously. For this reason the transformation of the old becomes easy. The old is discarded and the new is introduced. Both measures accord with time; therefore no harm results' (Wilhelm, 1968, p. 97).

'Postmodernism' as an umbrella title for a broad-based interdisciplinary intellectual movement has been used increasingly since the early '80s. For more on postmodernism see Smith (1982) as well as Griffin (1988a, b, c, 1990), Griffin, Beardslee and Holland (1989), and Griffin and Smith (1989). David Ray Griffin is the founding president of the Center for the Postmodern World as well as director of the Center for Process Studies, a younger colleague of Huston Smith, and professor of religion at the School of Theology at Claremont and Claremont Graduate School Griffin has brought together many outstanding authors to share ideas and publish articles on the topics of Theology, Religion, Culture, Spirituality, Politics, Economy, Art, Science and the Postmodern Vision.

Quoted in Gadon (1989) p.375.

Ron Miller (1988) says of holistic education: 'It is not any one teaching method but a social philosophy based on reverence for life and a profound respect for human potentials. It is at odds in many ways with the predominant materialism of modern industrial culture' (p. 5) and 'Holistic education is radical because modern culture has banished the sacred from our lives. Most of us have lost the intuitive knowledge, shared by traditional cultures around the world, that our existence as human beings is embedded in the grand unfolding of the universe. Quite simply, the determination of what is "normal" in modern culture is an impoverished conception of the human being' (p. 3). Miller (1990) has written on the historical roots of holistic education and the social, political and economic trends in North America which have prevented this approach from ever taking hold as an influence over educational policy. The Holistic Education Review, published quarterly since 1988, chronicles the ideas and experiences of this growing movement in educational philosophy and practice. Vol. 5, no. 4, Winter 1990 has a report on the Chicago Conference of June 1990 including 'The Chicago Statement on Education' summarizing the holistic perspective. This issue, as well, has a dialogue between Montessori and Waldorf educators. Vol. 5, no. 3, Fall 1992 on holistic science and science education gives a good overview of holistic science. Though I fully support the general direction and intention of this holistic movement in education, I sometimes question the jump-on-the-bandwagon mentality that clamors to write manifestos of philosophical doctrine proudly proclaiming the 'new truth' while the old paradigm, like a defeated god, wanders off to some subterranean psychic labyrinth to become the newest demon.
Chapter 5
Possible Sources of Disenchantment in the West

- Weeds • An excursion into Judaism, Christianity and Greek rationalism • Disgoding of nature • Male-war-gods push fertile-earth-mother-goddesses aside • God of Mount Sinai jealous of nature • Perhaps a pantheon is more democratic • God’s law rules • The trees are split apart • Jesus repairs the split • The supersensual abyss is suppressed • God delegates to church patriarchs • Don’t trust yourself • Be a sheep • Something went wrong and only the shepherd can make it right • Homeric hypnotics • Socrates, a martyr for independent thinking • Reason over instinct • Pythagorean faith in numbers over senses • Knowledge of numerical structure equals control and domination •

There is an ecology of bad ideas just as there is an ecology of weeds, and it is characteristic of a system that basic error propagates itself. It branches out like a rooted parasite through the tissues of life, and everything gets into a rather peculiar mess.

(Gregory Bateson, 1972, p. 484)

To understand what underpins fashionable present day theories of learning “styles” and scientific psychology in the West, I believe we have to make an excursion to examine briefly the religious assumptions and doctrines involved, which seem to me to be imbedded in Judaic and Christian theism and Greek rationalism. Something split the Western mind, and it has never fully recovered. What was it?

Morris Berman (1981) derives the title of his book *The Disenchantment of the World* from Max Webber’s German phrase: *die Entzauberung der Welt*, and he cites a similar phrase from the romantic poet Schiller: *die Entgotterung der Natur* or the ‘disgoding’ of nature (p. 69). He explains that the hallmark of modern consciousness is the radical separation between mind and nature. The materialist position which has dominated the way
we think and the way in which we educate our children in schools and their teachers at university is founded on the assumption that there is no element of mind in the so-called inert objects that surround us and that the existence of the world 'out there' is independent from human thought which is 'in here.'

Furthermore, it has been the habit of modern consciousness to assume that other ways of thinking, from other cultures and previous ages, especially the animism of nature religions, are misguided, immature, childish and superstitious. The closed-minded arrogance of this approach has been challenged, notably in the writings of those interested in mythology and religion, including Jung (1933, 1964), Campbell (1949, 1959, 1964) and Eliade (1959, 1962, 1964), while others, such as Kuhn (1962), Levi-Strauss (1967), Foucault (1972) and Barthes (1982), have recognized the fallacy of this progress theory of intellectual history. Nonetheless, as Berman (1981) points out, the view that scientific knowledge is superior is still the common one, as it permeates the media, the universities, and most other institutions of modern culture.

Rather than simply placing the blame only on the shoulders of Galileo, Descartes, Voltaire, Newton, Locke, Bacon and the other founding fathers of our current religion of scientism, Berman suggests that the progressive disenchantment of Western consciousness can be traced back as far as 2000 B.C.E., and he sees two particularly strong cultures, the Jewish and the Greek, as responsible for the beginnings of this development in the West. I wish to add to these disenchanting forces in Western culture certain tendencies in the institutionalized dogma of the Christian Church, for in addition to the dualistic theism and unrealistic blind faith in rationalism which influences modern psychology, I wish to point out how the doctrine of original sin has added to this a view that there is something deeply wrong within us and within our children that begs for a saviour to set it right.

Despite the fact that early Judaism had a strong mystical tradition and Gnostic heritage, which has survived as the cabalistic tradition, the official talmudic doctrine and that of the early Rabbinical teachings were based on rooting out animistic beliefs. The
cultural, mythological, and religious climate in the Mideast during the formation period of monotheistic Judaism was extremely rich and varied. According to Eliade (1958), Campbell (1964), Stone (1976) and Gimbutas (1989, 1991), this was the time when the paternal war-gods, representing an increasingly male domination of rulership and dominance in the growing city-states, were beginning to compete against the female earth goddesses, archetypes of fertility, growth, and the natural cycles of birth and death. In addition to the mother goddesses of early agrarian cultures, every local city state and small community lived and breathed among a pantheon of animistic nature principles, or spirit archetypes, that were integrated into the daily routine of their lives just as much as telephones, automobiles, computers, radio and television are integrated into our lives.¹

Yahweh, or the unnameable one, god of the Israelites, was a jealous god: ‘Thou shalt have no other gods before me.’ As Berman (1981) tells us:

> throughout Jewish history the injunction against totemism – worshipping “graven images” – has been central. The old testament is the story of the triumph of monotheism over Astarte, Baal, the golden calf, and the nature gods of the neighboring “pagan” peoples. (p. 70)

The monotheism of the Hebrew sages held that their single God created the world but remained outside it. Making such a distinction between God and God’s creation between a transcendent god and an immanent god, between sacred and profane, set up a theological paradox that became fuel for debate and speculation for thousands of years.² More importantly, perhaps, was the extent that this split entered into the cultural ethos, becoming a foundation of Western thought. Gregory Bateson (1972) comments on this very idea in his article ‘Form, Substance, Difference’:

> If you put God outside and set him vis-à-vis his creation and if you have the idea that you are created in his image, you will logically and naturally see yourself as outside and against the things around you. And as you arrogate all mind to yourself, you will see the world around you as mindless and therefore not entitled to moral or ethical consideration. The environment will seem yours to exploit. (p. 462)
In Indian and Oriental cultures it seems, in contrast to this notion of a jealous god, the older animistic nature spirits and the participatory consciousness that went along with them were allowed to flourish side by side with the newer war-like gods in a rich polytheism. This diverse heavenly family is contained within a context of non-dual philosophical thinking, esoteric mysticism, experiential and contemplative traditions that aim to integrate the transcendent and the immanent or unite heaven and earth. The Japanese cultural mixing of ancient Shinto nature spirits with war gods, and the non-theistic Zen and Tantric Shingon Buddhism is another excellent example of a synchronous mixing of old and new religions in an evolving culture. According to Stone (1976), the notion of one god can be seen as having significant political ramifications as well, when reflected within the human spheres of power:

We may even regard the concept of monotheism, so often presented as a more civilized or sophisticated type of religion, as reflecting the political ideology that places all power in a single dominant person: while polytheism, especially as represented in the image of divine assemblies, perhaps symbolizes a more communal attitude in the societies that developed and followed this type of theological thought. (p. 146)

The correlation between polytheism and communal attitudes may be true for some more primitive cultures; however, the history of patriarchal domination and rulership in India, China and throughout Eastern civilizations in general throws at least part of her notion into question. Nevertheless, the dominance of a male war-god in Western monotheism cannot be questioned, and the significance of this as a cornerstone of Western thought and experience cannot be underestimated. Joseph Campbell (1964) consistently pointed out that this difference between Western monotheism and the more eclectic, synchronistic or synthesis of religious views in the East has had a profound effect on how we think of ourselves as human beings and on our own potential for development:

According to our Holy Bible, ... God and his world are not to be identified with each other. God, as creator, made the world, but is not in any sense the world itself or any object within it, as A is not in any
sense B. There can therefore be no question, in either Jewish, Christian, or Islamic orthodoxy, of seeking God and finding God either in the World or in oneself. (vol. 3, p. 108)

Not being able to find God in oneself or in the world through any ordinary or extraordinary human effort left the possibility for developing mystical awareness or ecstatic union with God outside the orthodox and common religious experience of the people. It is true that both in the East and the West that only a chosen few are able to fully engage or complete the mystical journey; however, to believe in one’s godlike potential and hold a vision that it is possible to achieve higher levels of awareness through a culturally acknowledged path of transformation has been a commonly held view in the East while, at least until recently, in the West such a view has been held only by a few rare and courageous individuals who were often judged to be heretics. Campbell (1964) puts it in this way.

In any comprehensive view of the great and small mythological systems out of which the beliefs of humanity have been drawn, the biblical idea of God must be clearly set apart, as representing a principle nowhere else exclusively affirmed; namely, of the absolute transcendence of divinity. In the sacred books of the Orient, the ultimate mystery of being is said to be transcendent, in the sense that it “transcends” (lies above and beyond) human knowledge, thought, sight and speech. However, since it is explicitly identified with the mystery of our own being, and of all being whatsoever, it is declared to be immanent, as well: In fact, that is the main point of most Oriental, as well as most pagan, primitive, and mystical initiations. (vol. 3, p. 109)

In the West, the separation of God from His creation paved the way for science and technology, while in the East no such total separation between heaven and earth allowed for the development of a science of consciousness and a technology of mystical awareness, or as Feurstein (1989) puts it (describing yoga), a technology of ecstasy. A psychology that explicitly identifies the ultimate mystery, be it God, Brahman, emptiness or whatever, with the same mystery constantly expressing itself in our own being, is a psychology rooted in a non-dual appreciation of the unconditioned purity and inherent potential in all beings.
The extraordinary power of the one war-god of Mount Sinai to wipe out the diversity of the animistic nature gods represented, as Berman (1981) explains, the first glimmerings of what he calls non-participating consciousness, when the deeply felt merging with nature was no longer seen as a valid way of knowing but as 'idolatry' and a way of ignorance:

The rejection of participating consciousness, or what Owen Barfield calls “original participation,” was the crux of the covenant between the Jews and Yahweh. It was precisely this contract that made the Jews “chosen” and gave them their unique historical mission. (p. 71)

By splitting God from nature and one’s own participation in the process of nature, the essential ingredient of elemental wisdom was lost. Wisdom no longer came directly through the senses as one paid close attention to the signs of nature. Wisdom or God’s law came down from Mount Sinai on tablets or in the words of Moses and the other prophets. Thus, obedience to the law, obedience to the covenant became the new order. Study of words, laws, orders and books became the way of knowing as opposed to participation in an open and flowing process of intuitive discovery. As Campbell (1964) puts it:

Absolute distinction between Creature and Creator, which can be bridged, and even then but precariously, only by man’s obedience to a particular, quite specific, schedule of announced rules. (p. 109)

Knowledge itself became dissociated from its source. Knowledge became an abstraction set apart from ordinary experience. As well, knowledge of immortality, knowledge of the sacred is set apart from knowledge of the mortal and profane world, the world of good and evil. Campbell (1964) explains that the two trees, the Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of Immortal Life, are dissociated in the Biblical tradition. God, through a deliberate act, makes the Tree of Immortal Life inaccessible, ‘Whereas in other Mythologies, both of [pre-Christian] Europe and of the Orient, the Tree of Knowledge is itself the Tree of Immortal Life, and, moreover, accessible to [humanity]’ (p. 106).
Then Jesus came into this tradition and said 'I and the father are one.' This new approach, as discussed earlier, is not unlike the revelation of the Upanishads Tat tvam asi ‘Thou art That’ where even the most subtle sense of duality between the creator and the creature dissolves into a unitive state of the ultimate Godhead. Jesus reclaimed what had been lost and went beyond it. For his Father was not the God of Mount Sinai, the local war-god of the early Hebrew people. His father was the ultimate unitive being beyond all duality. The Gnostic Gospels reveal such a Christ who taught ‘Abandon the search for God and the creation and other matters of similar sort. Look for him by taking yourself as a starting point. Learn who it is within you…. To know the self is to know God.’

Elaine Pagels distills three essential teachings of the Gnostic Gospels: (1) ‘self knowledge is knowledge of God; the (highest) self and the divine are identical.’ (2) ‘The living Jesus of these texts speaks of illusion and enlightenment, not of sin and repentance.’ (3) ‘Jesus is presented not as Lord but as spiritual guide.’

Jesus said: ‘I am not your master, because you have drunk, you have become drunk from the bubbling stream which I have measured out...
He who will drink from my mouth will become as I am.’

The esoteric circle of disciples that Christ left behind, including John, Mary, Martha, Mary Magdalene, Theudas, Marcion and Valentinus, understood that the popular images of God as the king, master, lord, creator, and judge were distinct from God understood as the Ultimate God, the source of all being. These two levels of God were thought of as coming from two entirely different spheres of spiritual awareness. To reach the ultimate ground of being one had to go beyond God the creator to God the Immanent. This is the same realization held by Christian mystics, including the desert fathers of the Eastern Church, and St. Denys, St. Catherine of Genoa, Dame Julian of Norwich, and Meister Eckhart, as well as being in accordance with the Buddhist view of the Trikaya. But this deeply felt unity in one’s heart with the Godhead, this mystical revelation, was violently opposed by the established church.
One reason why this highest level of mystical unity was opposed was because it was so threatening on a purely religious, emotional or experiential level. To reach the ultimate unity demands a radical renunciation of the God of faith, the trustworthy and dependable God of Moses. It means opening into a void of unknowing. The Christian mystic Behmen expressed it in this way:

Whoever finds it finds nothing and all things. But how finds he Nothing? He that findeth it findeth a supersensual Abyss, which hath no ground to stand on; and he findeth also nothing is like unto it and therefore it may fitly be compared to Nothing, for it is deeper than any Thing. And because it is Nothing, it is therefore free from All Things, and is that only Good, which a man can not express or utter what it is, there being Nothing to which it may be compared, to express it by.  

Another reason why this ultimate realization was rooted out of the official church doctrine very early on in the history of Christianity is probably that it threatened the political power and authority of the early Bishops and banker-priests of the Roman church. Such an ultimate principle of unity, a God beyond God, directly available to the experience of all, meant an end to the tradition of law, and patriarchal authority fashioned in the image of God as the law giver; in short, it threatened their authority. This is evident in statements made by Clement the Bishop of Rome (c. 90 C.E.):

Clement argues that God, the God of Israel, alone rules in heaven as divine Lord, master, and judge. But how is God’s rule actually administered? God, he says, delegates his “authority of reign” to “rulers and leaders on earth.” Who are these designated rulers? Clement answers that they are bishops, priests, and deacons. Whoever refuses to “bow the neck” and obey the church leaders is guilty of insubordination against the divine master himself.  

In this way the mystical and ecstatic participatory union with the ultimate Godhead was discouraged and even banned by the early church as a way to uphold its temporal authority.
The doctrines of Original Sin and Redemption through Christ also maintained the authority of the Church by introducing a deep psychic wound that one could not heal except through complete dependence upon an all-powerful figure projected outside oneself. This all-powerful and all-forgiving Christ was available only through the church and through the priest who could hear confession and administer the sacrament. Campbell (1964) reminds us that Christ’s death on the cross repairs the split between the Tree of Immortal Life and the Tree of Knowledge by opening a way to salvation for all those born to original sin.

In the usual Christian view, all [humanity] has inherited from the revolt of the original couple a corruption of nature that has so darkened understanding, weakened the will, and inclined to evil, that without the miracle of God’s merciful assumption to himself of the guilt and punishment due to that sin, the human race would have remained forever divorced from its proper end in the knowledge, love, service, and beatitude of its creator. The optimistic Oriental notion that by introversion one may come of oneself to rest in a realization of godhood within (mythic identification) is here absolutely rejected: for there is nothing within according to this view, but a corrupt creaturely soul, neither godly in itself, nor capable of achieving, of itself, any relationship with God (mythic dissociation) – who, in forgiveness, on the other hand, has proffered a way, a path, a light, back to himself, in the person of his son, whose cross, Holy Rood, has countervailed the Tree (mythic restoration). (p. 114)

Without the doctrine of Original Sin, there would be no need for redemption and no need to look outside one’s own natural experience and process of being for a saviour. This doctrine convinces us to believe that we are somehow flawed or imperfect and suggests to us that there is an inveterate tendency to do evil. In modern psychological terms this flaw may be considered as originating in childhood through a similar fall from grace repeated in the consciousness of each child or is part of an inner drama played out to repress the narcissistic drive for omnipotence. In one way or another we have managed to convince ourselves that it is there. For a religion to play into this negative and degrading tendency by confirming it seems to me like the action of controlling and manipulative parent
figures who coerce their children into obeying them out of their own inability to feel secure
and legitimate in their authority. This breeds the sickness of not trusting oneself, not
trusting one’s own perceptions, one’s own direct intelligence, and one’s own intuitive
ability to discern the truth that is one’s own truth for the moment that one perceives it. This
breeds dependency and the sheep mentality of following the flock wherever they go. This
kind of dependence on an outside authority for a definitive answer is, I believe, the curse of
our Western educational system and the opposite of elemental wisdom.

Campbell (1967) reiterates here the circular logic of the Christian myth and tells us
that in Jewish doctrine the Christian law of original sin is rejected or, more correctly, never
really came into play:

Had there been no fall, there would be no need for redemption. The
image of the Fall is, therefore, essential to the Christian myth; whereas
the rites, festivals, and meditations of the synagogue rest, rather, on
the Legend of the Chosen People. (p. 113)

He goes on to quote the late Chief Rabbi of the British Empire, J. H. Hertz:

Man was mortal from the first, and death did not enter the world
through the transgression of Eve.... There is no loss of the God-
likeness of man, nor of man’s ability to do right in the eyes of God;
and no such loss has been transmitted to his latest descendants.... The
Psalmist often speaks of sin and guilt; but never is there a reference ...
to what Christian theology calls “The Fall.” One searches in vain the
Prayer Book, of even the Days of Penitence, for the slightest echo of
the doctrine of the Fall of man. “My God, the soul which Thou hast
given me is pure,” is the Jew’s daily morning prayer. “Even as the
soul is pure when entering upon its earthly career, so can man return it
pure to his Maker” (Midrash)... (p. 115)

Examining Greek origins of the split between mind and nature, Berman tells us that
in the period between Homer and Plato the Greek, mind began to move away from participa-
tory consciousness and animism toward reason and an increasing split between subject
and object. The storyteller in Homeric Greece was the teacher through the medium of oral
recitation of poetry. The performer would strum on the lute while he sang, to engage the
audience in a mildly hypnotic trance-like state, relaxing, erotic, and calming, evoking a sensual state of mind. The learning process was one of emotional identification with the characters, the story, and the images, not unlike the way that many of us learn today by being lulled into a trance in front of small or large screens which endlessly depict the human drama. Plato termed this active emotional identification *mimesis*, and according to Berman, Plato claimed that to submit oneself to the spell cast by the storyteller was pathological.

The Iliad (c. 900-850 B.C.E.) contains no words for internal states of mind which suggests a mentality that did not set up a distinction between what we regard as our subjective thought processes and external phenomena. According to Berman as well as Jaynes (1976) and Gebser (1985), the separation of mind and body, subject and object, is discernible as an historical trend by the sixth century B.C.E. The Homeric mentality of being immersed in a sea of experience learning about the world through participation and emotional identification is, according to Berman, precisely what Socrates and Plato broke away from by elevating reason and the independently thinking individual. Socrates was perhaps the first great martyr for this cause, and certainly his death and Plato’s telling of it did a lot to spread their message. Nietzsche (Golffing, 1956) pointed out how Plato’s Socrates in the *Apology* demonstrates his contempt for any mode of knowing outside reason when he is critical of ‘sheer instinct’ as a way for artisans to learn and pursue their craft.

Another place where we might identify the birth and flourishing of rational mind in the Greek ethos is in the enigmatic but historically significant cult of Pythagoras. The Pythagoreans clearly come out of a participatory consciousness which can be identified in their more mystical doctrines, such as the transmigration of souls and belief that the musical bard or storyteller poet, the physician, and the Pythagorean philosopher-king were the highest of rebirths before the attainment of eternal bliss. Despite paying homage to the importance of *mimesis*, or knowledge through poetic rapture, in their high regard for the
singing poet their brand of mysticism can perhaps also be identified as an origin of the Western tendency to glorify the split between mind and matter. Their cult was based on the mystery of numbers, and they believed that through the study of numbers they could purify themselves from the illusions of the senses. It is a credit to the Pythagoreans that there still exist today highly trained specialists, practicing advanced rites within the religions of science and mathematics, still confirmed in their pursuit of truth through the rarefied mental world of abstract calculations.

The Pythagoreans, like Plato, believed in a higher abstract realm of pure forms and pure numbers as separate from and opposed to the realm of mere matter. Yet a close connection or correspondence existed between the two realms. The realm of numbers somehow acted upon things and limited them. They believed that the harmony of eternal bliss, reflected in the cosmos, could be detected in fractions. Their fascination with ratios as a mental key to the ultimate mysteries of the universe can be seen as an origin of the Western obsession with quantitative and reductionistic rationality. The etymology of the word rational has obvious roots in the sacred ratios of the Pythagoreans.

Among other things it seems that Pythagoras explored the numerical relations between the length of a string and the pitch it sounds, or what we now describe as musical intervals. In this way he reduced the art of mousike, which the Greeks believed brought them closest to an experience of the divine, into simple mathematical formulas. Since Pythagoras regarded these formulas as the essence of music, they somehow also contained all the power and magical harmony of music, which lifts one's spirits up to the heavens. Pythagoras extended this way of understanding music to a notion that the essence of all things could be represented through various numerical expressions. As Bertrand Russell (1959) explains in Wisdom of the West, Pythagoras gave us:

...the notion that all things are numbers. Thus, to understand the world around us, we must find the number in things. Once the numerical structure is grasped, we have control over our world. It is the dominant feature of the modern conception of science.
In an attempt to isolate the essential laws of nature and then manipulate them to serve our own short-sighted needs and desires, something very precious has been lost, something having to do with the qualitative elements of human experience and meaning. I do not find fault with the Pythagoreans; here the problem seems to arise out of the popular imagination of our modern scientific era, which has misunderstood the relatively narrow function and limitations of the Pythagorean abstractions. Einstein, one follower of the Pythagorean way who perhaps came closer than any to revealing the mysteries of the universe through the abstract calculations of mathematics, when asked by a friend, 'Do you believe that absolutely everything can be expressed scientifically?' answered, 'Yes, it would be possible but it would make no sense. It would be description without meaning ... as if you described a Beethoven symphony as a variation in wave pressure.'

It is not the disciplines of science and mathematics in themselves that are responsible in the modern age for the loss of respect for and cultivation of the sacred wisdom inherent in our own experience, but rather a peculiar kind of tunnel vision which seems to be a result of our tendency to regard the rational way of solving problems, and the scientific way, as the ultimate and only way. This narrow-mindedness has furthered the disenchantment of our world and incurred a progressive lack of faith in the wisdom inherent within our moment to moment experience.

I do not wish to pass judgement on the teachings and intuitions of Pythagoras and his followers. For all I know, their methods and practices brought them to a way of explaining the universe that is as valid as any other, and since we are presently unaware of much of what they did in their secret cult, it is difficult to really know the full extent of their wisdom teachings. Yet we can assert that the contemporary tendency to believe that the answers to life's most crucial questions can be quantified and economically displayed as the relationship between certain numbers, dates back to the time of Pythagoras and his cult.

Blind faith in the myth of scientific objectivity and the exclusivity of the rational approach, and reductionistic and linear reasoning methods have led to a practice of
spoonfeeding pre-digested 'educational psychology' to teachers,\textsuperscript{17} which, in my opinion, puts them to sleep. They are given the covert message to ignore, in the shadow of a dependency on the experts, their own deeply personal process of insight that arises fresh in each instant.\textsuperscript{18} The disenchantment of our world due to the loss of a participatory consciousness connected to the ebb and flow of environmental conditions has left most of us blind and groping in the dark, unaware of our inborn wisdom.

Since I am suggesting that teachers in training might benefit from practicing contemplative methods to cultivate elemental wisdom of five different styles, it seems useful to briefly survey a few of the current learning style theories and methods of implementation in order to compare these with the intuitive approach that I am suggesting. Though I have gone to some effort in laying a foundation from which to view these learning style theories and practices in a critical way, I nonetheless wish to assert their usefulness as an adjunct study, within the context of a program that cultivates intuitive wisdom. Once a teacher has begun to cultivate a personal journey of awakening that allows the five elemental wisdom qualities to surface from within the mind of moment-to-moment experience, then various theories and teaching techniques can be taught as \textit{upaya} or skillful means.

This approach is a matter of shifting the priorities from our conventional tendency to define education as based in a context of theories and concepts to an approach where a teacher's intuitive experience is respected as the vanguard of the educational process. Theories and concepts are then regarded as ways of ordering experience, and never as scientific facts or truths. Such ways of ordering experience are then useful only so far as they serve as maps and signposts to highlight and structure personal awareness.

To teach \textit{upaya} without some introduction to, and gradual cultivation of \textit{prajna} is to put the cart before the horse and invite confusion as teaching techniques are practiced as an end in themselves. From the wisdom perspective, anything can become a teaching tool. Without wisdom, on the other hand, the techniques become like blunt instruments applied in a hit-or-miss fashion that might actually cause more harm than good. Luckily, wisdom is
the birthright of all of us. It is recognized in all the world's cultures, both sacred and secular, cropping up in every field of endeavour, every classroom and every teacher's mind. Meditation practice and the system of contemplative teachings I refer to here as elemental wisdom are simply one way to further cultivate a gift which we already possess.
CHAPTER 5 NOTES

1 Turner (1990), declares 'we are reentering at last the ancient animist universe,' explaining that the nymphs and dryads of today are microprocessors (p. 146).

2 For a Jewish theologian's perspective on how God can be both transcendent and immanent, see Heschel (1955) and Merkle (1985). Bloom (1990), a literary critic writing of his interpretation of the character of Yahweh in those Hebrew books of the Bible which he attributes to a highly talented writer working in the court of Solomon's son, a woman with a sophisticated sense of ironic wit, a woman now only known as J, says that: 'One can speculate that the history of Western theology is haunted throughout by the unassimilable personality of J's Yahweh; that haunting may be the force that still drives theology along.' Bloom tells us that 'Believers — whether Jewish, Christian, or Muslim — prefer an invisible Yahweh above the clouds, a kind of troublesome but remote gaseous vapor, or failing that, a tyrant suitably enthroned. J's lively Yahweh commences as a mischief-maker and develops into an intensely nervous leader of an unruly rabble of Wilderness wanderers.' He explains that the scholarly name for the disparity between the two is 'anthropomorphism' which is usually modified by the word 'crude,' yet in his view this anthropomorphic Yahweh of J's is far from crude but clever and complex, 'imaginative, even Shakespearean, while the normative reductions of Yahweh are quite primitive.' Furthermore, he tells us that 'the impetus to theologize Yahweh has also had the paradoxical effect of remythologizing Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. As God is rendered more abstract, the whole realm of demonology opens up as a substitute for the lost color of personality' (pp. 281, 282).

3 The war-like Vedic nomads who invaded the Indus valley brought with them their war gods, yet these gods existed within a diverse pantheon of gods and goddesses, nature spirits and mythological heroes known once as men and women but gradually elevated to the status of gods. These deities seemed also to have mixed, at least to some extent, with the animistic nature spirits of the pre-Vedic Indus civilization. Vedic hymns were divinely inspired expressions of deep spirituality. The earliest evidence of meditation in India seems to have been in the form of visionary hymns composed and sung in a state of deep contemplation, not all that different from those epic songs of the ancient Greek bards like Homer. Fuerstien (1989) tells us that 'the greatest book on yoga, the Bhagavad-Gita, was delivered by lord Krishna (God-man charioteer of Prince Arjuna) on the eve of one of the fiercest battles fought on Indian soil' (p.102; see also pp. 95-128).

4 Kiyota (1982) examines a contemporary syncretic Shinto-Buddhist school thriving in Japan. For more on the history and practice of Japanese Shinto with its nature spirits and hero gods called kami, see Ono (1962) and Nishida (1988).

5 Also see Barfield (1965), esp. chap. 16.

6 Quoted in Wilber (1981), p. 244.


9 Wilber (1981b) examines the revelation of Jesus and Christian mysticism from a perspective of three levels of spiritual awareness: 1. the relative appearance of reality experienced in our ordinary lives; 2. the intermediate spiritual sphere of gods, goddesses, nature spirits and archetypal spiritual forces; and 3. the ultimate unitive ground of all. Monotheism intuits oneness yet frequently this is taken to mean oneness on the intermediate level of Gods and Goddesses which is where the disenchantment problem seems to begin, that is, in a denial of multiple spiritual expressions flourishing in the unseen world between the ultimate ground and our everyday lives. Furthermore, according to Wilber, most expressions of monotheism are lodged within the intermediate spiritual sphere and are therefore not open to the radical emptiness or non-being of the ultimate unitive ground. The Christian mystics cited are a few of the exceptions who reached beyond this intermediate God in their contemplative awareness of the ultimate. Wilber quotes from St. Catherine of Genoa: 'My being is God, not by simple participation, but by true transformation of my being. My me is God'; from Dame Julian of Norwich: 'See! I am God; See! I am in all things; See! I do all things!'; and Meister Eckhart: 'The Ground of God and the Ground of the soul are one and the same' (p. 248).


As Westerners in the 20th century we are culturally steeped in perspectives which are fast becoming outdated, such as an unconscious dependence or vague clinging to the myth of 'scientific facts' or 'truths' or the unconscious hope that we will all be saved by the progress of better science and better technology. Will it be computers? Will we be saved by miracle drugs or genetic engineering? Maybe it is the 'green,' the 'natural,' and organic, non-polluting and recycling solutions that will save us?

General systems theory (von Bertalanffy 1968; Watzlawick, Weakland & Fisch, 1974) tells us that, more often than not, attempts to make gross level solutions feed the ever-growing monster called the problem, sometimes referred to as a positive feedback spiral or a system in runaway. This occurs because simple linear thinking - problem-solution, problem-solution - does not take into account the delicate balance-unbalance-rebalance process of an evolving open system. If we look directly at the origins of this tendency in our own state of mind we see that we cannot tolerate the discomfort of what we tend to define as a 'problem' and seek an immediate 'solution.' In my experience this is a cognitive outer mask of an emotional and energy intolerance and a need to dispel anxiety in a fruitless search for an imagined realm of ultimate security. We tend to have a sense that something is wrong, and it seems that the only way to set it right is to have faith in some power outside ourselves. The Western myth of original sin, in its modern version, can be seen as a reflection of this way of thinking and a way to give this tendency a kind of legitimacy. This literal version of the myth of original sin asserts that we are fundamentally flawed and that the only way to remove that flaw in order to experience peace of mind is found in a reliance upon a higher power projected as wholly other than us, a god outside of our given experience. Berne (1964) has pointed out this tendency in what he calls the persecutor-victim-saviour triangle, which is a game that can be played out at any level, from the politics and wars of nations to family fights and the intrapsychic dynamics played out between the multiple personalities which we all have. Ultimately, whether it is our faith in science and technology, religion and spirituality,materialistic success and power, or even systems theory, holistic thinking and the environmentally friendly economics of so-called sustainable development, the search for security from without seems essentially misguided. It seems to me to be a no-win situation where disempowered individuals within a society are condemned to search forever outside themselves for that which they have never lost. The contemplative approach takes a different tack. Buddhist teachings (Trungpa, 1973; Sogyal, 1992; Tibet House Editors, 1986) acknowledge that this kind of psychological dependence on a power perceived as outside oneself (not unlike the higher power of an Alcoholics Anonymous conversion experience; see Bateson, 1972, pp. 309-338) is a necessary step on the journey of awakening. In the Tantric Buddhist teachings and skillful means (upaya) which are in part a product of the Indian yoga tradition (Feuerstein, 1989), there are a series of stages of meditation and deity visualization practices carefully designed to essentially wear out this apparently universal need to project our own highest wisdom and source of liberation outside ourselves. The transmissions and blessings of the guru and the lineage teachers are also an integral part of this process. However, in Buddhist tantra all of this is done within a context of non-duality that is a pre-knowing that the ultimate wisdom, ultimate source of liberation and the ultimate guru are never separate from one's own experience of mind. Hence this system acknowledges that although there is a need for various tricks, or illusory manipulations of relative phenomena in order to overcome our tenacious grasping at illusory phenomena and our belief in our projections, these are all empty like a magic show and occur within an experiential context of the ultimate teaching on the non-duality of mind and its luminous or creative process. Leonard Cohen reports that Chesterton once said about religion: 'it's a good idea; too bad nobody has tried it' (Cohen & Bisaillon, 1993, p. 48).

Delumeau (1990) chronicles the development of a culture of guilt in 13th to 18th century European Christianity and Western culture. He identifies what came to be known as 'scruple sickness' emerging in the 14th century as a new fear to add to the predominant fear of 'siege mentality.' Instead of merely being afraid of an attack from the outside, it became common to fear an attack from the inside, a fear of oneself and one's hidden evil.


For more on Pythagoras, see Wheelwright (1966) and Barnes (1979). The mystical significance of numbers has been recognized in many world cultures, especially as the basis of many ancient forms of divination and prognostication. Observation of natural rhythms in day and night, the phases of the moon, the cycles of the seasons and in the celestial patterns of movement seemed to have impressed upon the ancients a reverence for numbers geometry and the relationships which could be expressed as ratios. These were seen as a code for reading meaning into the correspondences between heaven and
Educational psychology has been dominated by so-called 'experimental psychology' and 'scientific psychology' for 50 years or more, which according to Egan (1983) has not advanced the purposes of education in the least. Kline (1988) tells us that experimental psychology studies trivial topics which are divorced from what people believe to be important in their lives, which he says 'is largely due to the reliance of experimental psychology on the scientific method.' He further explains that experimental psychology continues to doggedly bark up hundreds of wrong trees because the high prestige of science in the Zeitgeist makes large amounts of money available for so-called 'scientific research,' compared to minimal funding to the arts. He describes the inertia in the cyclical pattern of reinforcement that blindly adheres to scientific psychology and exalts intellect over feelings, perpetuated by the educational system from grade one through to Ph.D. programs. He says, 'To the naive observer, experimental psychology looks totally worthless. Remove the trappings of science and academe and it is' (pp. 131-132), hence the title and subtitle of his book *Psychology Exposed or The Emperor's New Clothes.*

A similar sentiment was expressed by Hobsbawm (1970) in an article 'Is Science Evil?': 'What purport to be human and social sciences may actually diminish our knowledge, in so far as they substitute their confident inadequacy for the actual knowledge and praxis of [our] social experience' (p. 149).
PART II
Psychology: Styles and Stages
Chapter 6
Two Learning Style Systems
Derived from Contemporary Psychology

- How would you build your little airplane? • A training in tolerance and seeing beyond yourself • Learning stylists have their own styles • ‘Diagnosis’? Are styles an illness? • Is more assessment technology what we need? • Is it helpful to speak of ‘structures of neural organization’? • Skills, not styles • To isolate figure from ground, or not to isolate? Is that the question? Why not both? • Some touch, some look, some listen • Drop-outs are easily bored by school routines and like to do things in their own way • Does abstract data help? • Teaching: the art of making the complex simple • Concrete vs. abstract • Acting vs. reflecting • Action is not a school subject • Four styles of learners nailed to Kolb’s cross • Learning moves in a circle: round and round she goes, where she stops nobody knows •

We use science most wisely when we listen for the old gnosis which resonates through its every concept and theory.

(Theodore Roszak, 1975, p. 114)

What are learning styles? One easy way to call to mind a sense of different styles is to imagine how you might put together a complex mechanical object. Imagine that a lightweight one-seater airplane has just arrived in a box on your driveway complete with pages and pages of detailed diagrams and step-by-step directions. There are many ways that you might go about putting together your new toy.

1. You might casually toss the instructions in the garbage, then jump right in by picking up all the pieces and turning them over in your hands, feeling your way through the entire assembly.

2. You might lay out all the parts and organize them into easy-to-see categories and then visualize how they fit together.
3. You might meticulously read all the instructions, then proceed carefully, step by step, following each instruction exactly as it is ‘by the book.’

4. You might be the type that only relates to the pictures and diagrams, scrutinizing them in great detail, while ignoring the overly wordy and even confusing text.

5. Perhaps your initial response is to feel overwhelmed by all the details involved in understanding both the instructions and the hundreds of parts. Consequently your first impulse is to look for someone to help you in this project. Once you have sold someone on the idea that it is worth their while to help you, you might then either read the instructions out loud while your new partner does the dirty work, or you might have your helper read aloud while you do the job. Either way, you have made a new friend or developed a relationship in the process.

These are just a few of the almost endless variations of how different people perceive, organize, process and interact with their world.

Why should teachers study learning styles? I feel that if teachers have a better awareness of learning styles they will be more tolerant of students who learn differently from themselves. In the past, narrow notions of what constitutes learning and what does not blocked out a large percentage of young learners from their inherent ability to learn. Now it is possible to broaden teaching styles so that more students can learn and feel positive about their own unique way of learning.

A teacher’s attitude of understanding and respect for different learning styles would also be transmitted to the students. An important part of growing up and developing as a full human being has to do with broadening one’s perspective in order to understand others who are quite different from oneself. Presently, in this age of the global village, there is a great deal of excitement in our schools about learning to appreciate and respect other cultures. It is generally accepted that such study promotes peace and cultural richness. Perhaps it would be more realistic if one could simultaneously learn to appreciate and
respect the student in the desk beside one, who sees the world and learns in a style that is quite different from one's own. A deeper understanding and deeper tolerance for individual differences in the community of a classroom lays a foundation for understanding and tolerance through the rest of one's life.

I have chosen two well-known learning style systems to review as a way of introducing the topic and assessing what is presently available. One is the "Learning Styles Profile" put together by the U.S. National Association of Secondary School Principals out of Reston, Virginia, particularly under the direction of James W. Keefe. The other is the 4 MAT system devised by Bernice McCarthy of Barington, Illinois. Both systems are eclectic, drawing on diverse research in learning styles from over the past thirty years or more.¹

Both systems have strengths and weaknesses. To compare them is, in itself, an exercise in examining different styles, for although both systems draw on similar research for their perspectives, presentations and end results, as applicable models they are vastly different in style. McCarthy's 4 MAT system, is, as we will later see, primarily devoted to restructuring curricula to maximize learning for students of all learning styles. This, I believe, goes beyond the NASSP Learning Styles Profile approach, which aims at "diagnosis" and "individualized instruction".

Though quite different from the five styles of elemental wisdom in emphasis, there are still similarities in the way categories are arranged according to perceptual and cognitive models. An awareness of the relevant underlying emotion connected to each of these perceptual and cognitive styles seems to be missing, as is an understanding of various emotions as containing the potential energy of intuitive wisdom styles.

The hallmark of the NASSP Learning Styles Profile (L.S.P.) is that it is grounded in psychological and scientific research of learning styles and that it maintains this perspective of the so-called hard sciences in its presentation and implementation. The style of writing in the literature surrounding the L.S.P., though more or less accessible to a well-
trained teacher or educator, tends to be complex and technical. The tone of the material is of
the kind that puts a great deal of faith in science and technology as a comprehensive system
for finding the answers to problems, educational or social. The L.S.P. is billed as a “state
of the art assessment tool,” and accurate “assessment technology” seems to be the primary
focus. This seems to come out of the mechanistic medical model that asserts that we can
break things down into smaller components, find out what is wrong and then somehow fix
it. Even when fixing it in this case means matching learning and teaching styles, there is to
my way of thinking a blindness to the whole-person-in-process and a fixation on problems
and solutions (original sin and salvation), whereas the elemental wisdom approach ideally
does not focus on what went wrong, but embraces all a student has to offer as useful
energy.2

The strength of the Profile is that it is very thorough in considering many of the
different variables of learning style and the many different variations and combinations of
styles that might make up the profile of any individual learner. I began this chapter by using
an imagining exercise as one means of beginning to define what is meant by learning
styles. I tried to evoke in the reader an experience that brings personal meaning to the term
learning styles. Remembering this approach, let us now see how the theoretical information
attached to the Learning Style Profile defines the term.

encompassing cognitive, affective, physiological, and environmental dimensions.
However, aside from this image of an umbrella, there does not seem to be any other
concept or notion of integration that could tie together all of these separate aspects of
learning styles as parts of one person. In the Profile, each aspect has its own way of being
measured as an isolated component, similar to the way we use a different test to determine
the power remaining in a car battery from that to determine the manifold pressure of the
engine. Keefe (1987) and the NASSP Task Force that devised the Learning Style Profile
defined learning style as:
the composite of characteristic cognitive, affective, and physiological
factors that serve as relatively stable indicators of how a learner
perceives, interacts with and responds to the learning environment. It
is demonstrated in that pattern of behaviour and performance by which
an individual approaches educational experiences. Its basis lies in the
structure of neural organization and personality that both molds and is
molded by human development and the learning experience of home
school and society. (p. 3)

Let us now look at the variables that the Profile attempts to assess. The following is
a list of scales used in the Learning Style Profile that test for cognitive styles, perceptual
responses and the study and instructional preferences which include elements of both
affective styles and physiological preferences. I include the brief and somewhat cryptic
explanations as they are given in the Learning Style Profile Examiners Manual:

1. ANALYTICAL SKILL—To identify simple figures hidden in a complex field; the ability to
separate out distinct parts from the whole and the knack of using the critical element of a
problem in a different way. These are skills that are useful in mathematics and the sciences.
2. SPATIAL SKILL—To identify shapes and patterns, remember them, and discriminate subtle
differences in similar patterns. A second component of this skill is the ability to recognize and
construct objects in mental space and to rotate objects in the imagination.
3. DISCRIMINATION SKILL—To visualize the important elements of a task; to focus attention
on required detail and avoid distractions.
4. CATEGORIZATION SKILL—To use reasonable vs. vague criteria for classifying information; to
form accurate, complete, and organized categories of information.
5. SEQUENTIAL PROCESSING SKILL—To process information sequentially or verbally; to readily
derive meaning from information presented in a step-by-step, linear fashion.
6. SIMULTANEOUS PROCESSING SKILL—To grasp visuospatial relationships; to sense an overall
pattern from the relationships among component parts.
7. MEMORY SKILL—To retain distinct vs. vague images in repeated tasks; to detect and
remember subtle changes in information.
8. PERCEPTUAL RESPONSES:
   VISUAL—Initial reaction to information as visual response.
   AUDITORY—Initial reaction to information as auditory response.
   EMOTIVE—Initial reaction to information as emotional and/or physiological response.
9. PERSISTENCE ORIENTATION—Willingness to work at a task until completion.
10. VERBAL RISK ORIENTATION—Willingness to express opinions, speak out, etc.
11. VERBAL-SPATIAL PREFERENCE—For verbal vs. non-verbal activities.
12. MANIPULATIVE PREFERENCE—For "hands-on" activities.
13. STUDY TIME PREFERENCE
   EARLY MORNING
   LATE MORNING
   AFTERNOON
   EVENING
14. GROUPING PREFERENCE—For whole class vs. small groups.
15. POSTURE PREFERENCE—For formal vs. informal study arrangements.
16. MOBILITY PREFERENCE—For moving about and taking breaks vs. working until finished.
17. SOUND PREFERENCE—For quiet study vs. some background sound.
18. LIGHTING PREFERENCE—For bright vs. lower lighted study areas.
19. TEMPERATURE PREFERENCE—For study in cool vs. warm environment.  

To my way of thinking, arranging learning style concepts so that they can be measured as scales on a standardized test does a disservice to the idea of respecting each style as equally valid and not judging one as more desirable than another. The very activity of filling in the little blanks on a standardized test involves a very narrow notion of what learning means and ignores the living, breathing and energetic aspects of learning.

Keefe (1987) reviews some of the research and theoretical background behind the cognitive scales. Each scale measuring cognitive style above comes from research that originally assessed styles as two opposite but equally valid types of cognition. This kind of bipolar perspective, at its best, does not place any value judgement on one cognitive style over another; rather, it just clearly illustrates how different the two modes are. However, the L.S.P., as far as I can tell, has been written and structured with a clear bias toward one aspect of each of these bipolar cognitive styles. In each case, the bias is in favour of those cognitive skills (note: skills and not styles) necessary for traditional school achievement.
The theories of field independence vs. dependence (Witken et al., 1954), broad or narrow scanning (Gardner & Long, 1962; Holzman, 1966), high vs. low tolerance for incongruous or unrealistic experiences (Gardener et al., 1959), conceptual vs. perceptual (Broverman, 1960a, b), strong vs. weak automatization (Broverman, 1960a, b), broad and narrow categories (Pettigrew, 1958), cognitive complexity vs. simplicity (Bieri, 1961; Scott, 1962), and leveling vs. sharpening (Gardener et al., 1959; Holzman & Gardener, 1960) have been over-simplified in the L.S.P. For example, let us look at two scales from above; scale 1. Analytical skill and scale 4. Categorization skill.

The first scale is derived from experiments in perceptual discrimination. Analytical here means field independence or the tendency to perceive things as distinct from their background field. Non-analytical means field dependent or the tendency to see a figure as influenced by background field or to recognize the mutual interdependence of figure and ground (Witkin et al., 1954).

In these times of increasing environmental awareness, the ability to see ourselves as embedded in a larger environmental context is more and more acknowledged as an important skill, while the tendency to view any situation as isolated from its context as an independent objective phenomenon, though certainly useful at times, is now being criticized as fundamentally inaccurate as well as a cause of many modern problems (Roszak, 1993), including pollution and the overuse of natural resources. I would think that a balanced approach that encourages students to develop both kinds of perception would be optimal. Nonetheless the L.S.P. places a value judgement, regarding highly the analytic skill, while disregarding the positive aspects of the non-analytical skill and defining it in negative terms as a lack of skill.

Scale number 4. Categorization has been dealt with in a similar way. Pettigrew (1958) recognized two opposite tendencies in the way we establish conceptual categories. The broad categories includes many items to lessen the risk of leaving something out, while the narrow categories tends to exclude doubtful items to lessen the possibility of including
something that does not fit. Both of these approaches have advantages and disadvantages depending on the situation at hand. However, the L.S.P. regards narrow categorizing as a superior tendency.

In part, the cognitive component of the L.S.P. is derived from the work of Charles Letteri of the University of Vermont, who devised a similar profile by combining several existing cognitive style elements derived from the researchers mentioned above, in order to predict student achievement on standardized tests (Letteri, 1980). Using the cognitive style elements, Letteri rates students as high achievers, average achievers or low achievers in academic performance and standardized tests. This, I believe, is missing the point entirely. Standardized tests are, by design, only a measure of a very narrow range of many different possible kinds of cognition and intelligence. Similarly, the L.S.P. identifies strengths and weaknesses in these specific cognitive skills with bias toward one end of the spectrum, and therefore, it is in part more like a traditional intelligence test than an assessment of different kinds of cognitive strengths.

One way that the L.S.P. has attempted to counteract this tendency is in assessing one of the most important bipolar cognitive style pairs as separate scales. These are number 5: sequential processing skill (the skill usually rewarded by the conventional school value system) and number 6: simultaneous processing skill (a skill that has only recently been investigated and has not generally been rewarded by the conventional school value system because it is more intuitive and not rational). If the L.S.P. organized the other bipolar cognitive style pairs in this way it might be less biased in tone and more useful in assessing learning style.

Most theorists and educators working with learning styles agree that perceptual modality preference (number 8) is an important learning style component. Some of us learn more easily through activity, movement and touch, involving kinesthetic and psychomotor sensing modes (identified as emotive). Others of us learn more easily by watching, visualizing, reading, looking at pictures, diagrams or any other kind of visual aid. Still
others of us are most comfortable within the auditory mode and thus learn by listening, verbalizing and imagining sounds, rhythms and words.

Researchers seem largely in agreement that these modes evolve in a sequential manner through the developmental process. Beginning with kinesthetic responsiveness in early childhood, visual responsiveness during early schooling, and auditory in later schooling a child progresses along until he or she can coordinate all three together. Nevertheless, any individual may have a discernible preference or assess the other two modes through a preferred mode (Bruner, Oliver & Greenfield, 1966; Sperry, 1972; Messick et al., 1976).

It is perhaps important to point out that despite their sequential development there is no higher or lesser mode. Each is merely different and has its own unique kind of intelligence. The genius of great dancers, surgeons, mechanics, inventors and experimenters attests to the depths and richness of the kinesthetic/psychomotor intelligence, while the work of great painters, architects, film makers, and theoretical scientists attests to the depths and richness of the visual intelligence. Finally, our great storytellers, journalists, poets, historians, orators and writers of all kinds attest to the depths and richness of the auditory and verbal mode.

The scales for testing the study and instructional preferences (numbers 13-19) are more or less straightforward. Perhaps the exception here is number 14: the grouping preference for whole class vs. smaller groups, which is decidedly more of an affective issue and could vary widely for any individual student at any time, depending on many other variables. Some of these variables might include the material being studied, the mode of instruction, the goal of grouping, the amount of time that the class has been together and the particular learning styles of each member in any possible group, as well as the fluctuations in the social drama of classroom cliques and friendships. No standardized test could ever give one an up-to-date reading on all of these shifting factors.
Much of these later scales of the L.S.P., as well as the affective scales 9-12 from the list above, were adapted from The Learning Style Inventory developed by Rita Dunn, Kenneth Dunn and Gary Price of St. John’s University in New York. This 104-item self-report questionnaire, the L.S.I., has been fairly successful in supporting alternative approaches to instruction (Dunn, R. & Dunn, K., 1978; Dunn & Griggs, 1988). The L.S.I. assesses eighteen elements organized into four categories of pervasive learning style conditions.

1. **Environmental** – Sound, Light, Temperature, Design
2. **Emotional** – Motivation, Persistence, Responsibility, Structure
3. **Sociological** – Self-oriented, Colleague-oriented, Authority-oriented, Pair-oriented, Team-oriented, Varied
4. **Physical** – Perceptual, Intake, Time, Mobility

Testing for these variables certainly has its place in the learning style field. For example, Dunn and Griggs (1988) report on an alternative program set up in suburban Washington Schools. This program, called C.L.I.P., Contracted Learning for Individual Pacing, was organized to assess potential school dropouts and then to give them the educational experience that would fit their needs and thus prevent them from leaving school. Using the learning styles inventory, their studies showed that potential dropouts were as a whole:

- not early morning learners
- highly peer and teacher motivated, not self-motivated
- tactile and kinesthetic, and not auditory or visual learners
- unable to sit for long periods of time
- in need of a variety of alternative opportunities; to learn alone, with peers, and with their teachers
- unresponsive to consistent instructional routines and repetition
- quickly bored when required to learn through existing patterns
• able to remain on task longer when permitted to structure, on their own terms, how they did assignments

By segregating these students out from the mainstream educational system and tailoring the learning environment directly to their needs, this alternative program, C.L.I.P., was quite successful in cutting back on dropout rates (Dunn & Griggs, 1988).

I believe it is certainly useful for teachers to learn, study, understand and experience these different variables, both in themselves and in their students. However, using a standardized ‘diagnostic tool’ as the primary means to this end seems awkward, indirect, and impersonal.

For example, consider the scales for posture preference and mobility preference from the L.S.P. list above. Any self-respecting teacher is certainly aware of those students that prefer to study in an informal posture and those that require mobility to learn. If teachers are not aware of such tendencies in their students, there must be a simpler way to encourage such an awareness, without having to resort to the indirect, impersonal and awkward means of standardized testing.

I find that any time I have taken such a standardized diagnostic test, my answers have been guesses based on hypothetical, imagined situations which greatly oversimplify the innumerable variables that might affect my answer. I always feel that such tests which try to isolate specific psychological tendencies from the rich complexity of life are an irritation and an insult to my intelligence. However, sometimes the process of taking such a test can be educational, giving me a new set of categories with which to view myself and assess my strengths and weaknesses.

After scoring the results of such a test, a teacher is left with their hands full of sheet after sheet of abstract data that still need to be translated into practical steps for helping each individual student. How can all these complex details be integrated into a practical steps for helping each individual student learn?
In my opinion, it is not easy for teachers to use this material in the immediacy of their classrooms to improve their teaching and their students' learning. Such a purely intellectual and scientific approach to the theory and practice of learning styles, with its standardized tests, rigid diagnostic criteria and prescribed teaching methods, perpetuates a system that labels children and denies the creativity, intelligence and resourcefulness of the teacher.

The 4 MAT learning style system of Bernice McCarthy comes to the understanding and application of learning styles from a very different perspective, which I believe is much more compatible with this notion of teaching as an art.

McCarthy's (1980) book The 4 MAT System Teaching to Learning Styles with Right/Left Mode Techniques is, at first glance, strikingly different from the Learning Styles Profile literature. The very design of the book reflects the philosophy it promotes. It is an oversize book and the print is very large and easy to read. Each page is aesthetically laid out, leaving ample open space, and no two pages look alike. The design of each page is adapted to the material being presented. This variation in page design is ingenious in its ability to keep the reader awake and alert, unlike conventional books with their monotonous design that can tend to lull some readers to sleep. The pages of McCarthy's book are filled with simple yet meaningful graphics of two types. Those of one type are the simple but precisely appropriate pictorial representations which inform us in a very direct way at one glance. The other type are more complex graphs, charts and diagrams which need to be studied carefully. These are so well thought out that they serve as mnemonic devices that allow the reader to remember a vast amount of information in one mental image.

Furthermore, McCarthy's writing is very clear, unpretentious, straightforward, and often even poetic. One can imagine that such a book supports the view that teaching is an art, since the book itself is so conceived.

Some scholars might consider this book not fit for university-level study, because it looks like it was designed for children. Nevertheless, it is filled with concepts as complex
as those presented by the NASSP literature on learning styles. The difference here is that
the 4 MAT book attempts to explain complex ideas in a simple way so that they can be
easily understood. In contrast to this, the NASSP literature, like the writing in many
‘professional’ journals, seems to obscure the main ideas in a complicated writing style that
uses technical jargon, excessively detailed information and in general obfuscates.

McCarthy, following a system devised by David Kolb (1971, 1983), says that there
are two aspects to how we learn. The first is how we perceive, and the second is how we
process. Some people perceive by sensing and feeling, while others perceive with a more
logical approach. Those who perceive by sensing and feeling immerse themselves in
concrete reality and are concerned with meaning, while those that perceive through thinking
tend more to the abstract dimensions of reality and are more concerned with knowing.
Those who sense concretely learn through empathy or, as McCarthy says, “through the
lens of personhood” and are intuitive, taking things in as a gestalt. They take pride in their
overall sense of things as a whole and are quick to make connections between things. The
abstract thinkers, on the other hand, learn by separating themselves from their experience.
They are objective, tending to stand outside of experience to analyze it. They take in their
world as bits of information and see themselves as more free from the biases inherent in the
personality of the perceiver. They take pride in the distinct clarity of their perception. They
are quick to see the differences in things and like to set up boundaries, create categories,
and preserve distinctness.

A prose description of these two poles conjures up one kind of understanding.
Perhaps, in this case, a more efficient way to display these ideas is through an illustration.
Traditionally, schools have valued only the abstract/thinking approach to perception. Students who tend more to the concrete/intuitive approach to perception are often made to feel that they are not as intelligent as those students who perceive in the “right way”. They are made to feel that there is something wrong with them. Often these students are diagnosed as having a ‘learning disability’ or a ‘brain dysfunction.’ Also, students who do well with the abstract/thinking approach rewarded at school are seldom challenged to expand their abilities toward the concrete/intuitive mode.

It is interesting to point out that from the non-dual wisdom perspective these two modes of knowing are not particularly regarded as polar opposites forever separated at the end of a black rod. Rather they are seen as two parts of one ongoing process whereby the inexpressible intuitive awareness takes on a communicative shape in the form of abstract concepts and symbolic expressions. McCarthy acknowledges this to a limited extent in her outer circle that connects these two modes in a suggestion for how to teach. Bergson and Spinoza suggested that intuition is actually a superior way of knowing the truth, as it is not chopped up into what Bergson referred to as ‘patterned immobility’ and intuition puts one into direct contact with ultimate reality, which for Spinoza was a unified whole or God.
This is also true in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition that combines study and meditation to cultivate an intuitive awareness which transcends conventional intellect. In the Tibetan tradition these two, intellect and intuition, are said to work together like the two wings of a bird.

The second aspect of learning styles that rounds out McCarthy's 4 MAT system has to do with how we process experience and information and make it part of ourselves. There are those who watch and reflect upon new experience. They need a chance to mull it over to internalize experience. They contemplate connections between what they are learning and what they already know. They prefer to consider things carefully before putting their ideas into action. Then there are the doers, those who like to act first and reflect after they have given it a try. They need to play around with ideas in the manifest world because they do not separate thought and action. For them, action is a kind of thinking. They like to experiment and test things out. They are not afraid of making mistakes but learn naturally by trial and error.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOERS</th>
<th>REFLECTIVE OBSERVERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>act first, reflect later</td>
<td>watch and reflect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do not separate thought and action</td>
<td>internalize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experiment and test things out</td>
<td>contemplate connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not afraid of making mistakes</td>
<td>consider carefully before action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learn by trial and error</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3. Doers vs. Reflective Observers

These two styles of learning are reminiscent of the receptive and active forms of non-dual wisdom which we have seen as associated with female and male symbols respectively, known as prajna and upaya in Sanskrit or associated with yin and yang in the Chinese Tao. The contemplative path cultivates the reflective capacity to its highest degree, at which point spontaneous compassionate action becomes the natural response, bringing these two, which on an ordinary level might seem to be polar opposites, into a perfect union which is the essential meaning behind the tantric imagery of female and male deities.
in sexual union. Most contemplative traditions seem to agree that to cultivate one without
the other eventually causes an unhealthy imbalance, although there are certainly times or
phases in life when one or the other is preferred as the dominant path to realization.

Since schools usually value the reflective style, they often expect your best effort on
the first try. This does not give those who are concentrating their energy in the active mode
a chance to experiment, because making mistakes is a negative thing at most schools. The
teacher will say “No, that’s wrong,” or mark up your papers with lots of red ink. If you
learn by making lots of mistakes it often shows up on your report card.

Schools generally prefer that students reflect and internalize in the classroom,
because it is a quiet and orderly process. Schools prefer that students keep their action-
oriented learning to the playground, the gymnasium, or the sports field. This segregates
learners by convenience. Is it any wonder that there are intelligent athletes who do poorly in
academics?

A doer in the classroom is highly criticized because he is always getting out of his
seat and wants to touch things. He learns by moving, touching, feeling, doing. He learns
by making a mess, taking things apart and then putting them back together as best he can.
The doer is willing to take risks. For him, they are not even risks; they are experiments,
and life is a game of trial and error. But because most schools do not value this kind of
learning and do not have a way to engage his style, his behaviour is seen as pathological.
He is labeled “hyperactive” and a “discipline problem”. Naturally, he begins to believe that
something is wrong with him, and this insecurity breeds further negative behaviour. Or if
he is true to himself, he recognizes on some level that there is a negative force in his
environment that suppresses his best qualities. Feeling this he becomes resentful, angry
and rebellious. He acts out against this repression which is so entrenched in the system that
everyone is fooled into thinking that he is a bad child, when actually it is the system that is
to blame for his anger and frustration.
Once out of school, the active doers usually fare better because our society, unlike school, rewards us for getting things done. If this is what our society expects from us, why don't schools include some training in active learning as well as reflective learning? McCarthy (1980) advocates a curriculum that taps the strengths of all styles as well as training to overcome style-related weaknesses. As she says:

Watchers need to refine their reflective gifts, while also developing the courage to experiment and try. And doers need to refine their experimenting gifts, while also developing the patience to watch reflectively. To allow and encourage children to do both is to believe in excellence. (p. 19)

David Kolb, who first devised this system in 1971, put these two dimensions of perceiving and processing together to form four learning styles:

I find Kolb's terms somewhat awkward, yet I have introduced them here because Kolb's conceptualization is a primary theory behind McCarthy's 4 MAT System. McCarthy, however, was involved in her own research during a six-year experiment in a suburban
Chicago high school. She also formulated her observations into four types of learners. Once again I have arranged these four types in accordance with Kolb’s crossed poles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concrete Experience</th>
<th>Reflective Observation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type Four Learner</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>looks for hidden possibilities</td>
<td>looks for meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>judges things by gut reaction</td>
<td>judges in relationship to values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>functions by synthesizing various parts</td>
<td>functions through social interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wants to challenge complacency</td>
<td>wants to make world a better place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is enthusiastic and adventurous</td>
<td>is cooperative and social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tends to disregard authority</td>
<td>respects authority when earned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type Three Learner</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>looks for solutions to problems</td>
<td>looks for intellectual competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>judges things by their usefulness</td>
<td>judges by facts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>functions through kinesthetic awareness</td>
<td>functions by adapting to experts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wants to make things happen</td>
<td>wants to know “important things”, and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is practical and straightforward</td>
<td>add to world’s knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sees authority as necessary, but will work around it if forced</td>
<td>is patient and reflective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type One Learner</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type Two Learner</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Abstract Conceptualization</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5. McCarthy’s 4Mat

After McCarthy had made connections between her own observations and those of Kolb, she studied other systems and began to see that they too could be understood from this perspective. Many of the systems McCarthy investigated are based more or less on Jung’s theory of psychological types, which she found could easily be arranged on Kolb’s cross. A simplified version of the sixteen types from the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator as applied to education by Gordon Lawrence (1979) can also be understood in relation to Kolb’s cross. Likewise, another adaptation of Jung’s types for education by Simon and Byram (1977) has the four types described in a slightly different way. The work of Keirsey and Bates (1978), which arranges the Jung-Meyers typology according to the temperament types from Greek mythology as described by Hippocrates, also fits neatly into the McCarthy-Kolb conceptualization.
McCarthy finds Merrill's (1981) work on social responses in the field of management training also to be useful in fleshing out an understanding of the four types. Finally, McCarthy has investigated the work of a dancer and creative movement educator, Valerie Hunt (1964), whose four patterns of “body tension” she feels are strikingly similar to other learning style research. McCarthy presents these connections in a simple yet powerful graphic format, which is reproduced on the next page.

In developing the 4 MAT system, McCarthy has integrated various insights from each of these different models to come up with a fairly comprehensive system. However, it is not a static system that simply describes learning styles; rather, it is one that becomes a map describing the cycle of the learning process itself.

Kolb’s cross, which McCarthy modifies, is in some ways reminiscent of the Christian cross, which has symbolised many things down through the ages of Christianity, including the tension between cosmic opposites which find their union in Christ’s crucifixion symbolically represented by the centre of the cross. To the best of my knowledge, the significance of the centre of the cross as a unitive ground of opposites has not been explored by Kolb or McCarthy.4

The brilliance of McCarthy’s 4 MAT system is that it becomes a tool for teaching all four learning types simultaneously and an ingenious method for deepening the learning experience for everyone. As a teacher with many years of experience, McCarthy feels that there is no advantage to simply matching teaching style to learning style. Rather, her system accommodates learners of all styles, while also challenging them to broaden their learning capabilities. In this way, every student learns while also opening up new pathways of learning through styles that are different from their own.

The conventional North American school curriculum has concentrated on the rational, analytic and abstract conceptual mode to the exclusion of all the others. This conventional curriculum is suited for type two learners (about 30% of the students, according to McCarthy). The other 70% make do the best they can. I am in accordance with
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KOLB</th>
<th>Concrete Experience</th>
<th>LAWRENCE</th>
<th>Concrete Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intuitive (marketing)</td>
<td>Active Experimentation</td>
<td>Reflective Observation</td>
<td>Imaginative (counseling)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical (engineering)</td>
<td>Theoretical (research &amp; design)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract Conceptualization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>People-oriented and sympathetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Experimentation</td>
<td>Reflective Observation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JUNG</th>
<th>Concrete Experience</th>
<th>SIMON &amp; BYRAM</th>
<th>Concrete Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intuition directed</td>
<td>Active Experimentation</td>
<td>Reflective Observation</td>
<td>Feeling directed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body directed</td>
<td>Intellect directed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract Conceptualization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Helpful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective Observation</td>
<td>Reflective Observation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sensitive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KIERSEY &amp; BATES</th>
<th>Concrete Experience</th>
<th>HUNT</th>
<th>Concrete Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dionysus Strives for variety and excitement</td>
<td>Apollo Strives for authenticity</td>
<td>Active Experimentation</td>
<td>Reflective Observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promethean Strives for future security</td>
<td>Enriches reality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract Conceptualization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Absorbs reality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective Observation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Forms reality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MERRILL</th>
<th>Concrete Experience</th>
<th>McCARTHY</th>
<th>Concrete Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiastic stimulating ambitious dramatic friendly</td>
<td>Active Experimentation</td>
<td>Reflective Observation</td>
<td>Supportive dependable willing respectful agreeable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong willed independent practical decisive efficient</td>
<td>Industrious exacting persistent orderly serious</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract Conceptualization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Seeks hidden possibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective Observation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Seeks personal meaning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 6.** McCarthy’s Crosses
McCarthy in believing that it is just as important to help the type two learners cultivate non-conceptual skills as it is to give an opportunity for students with the other styles to excel within a curriculum adapted to their style. This idea that the reflective, conceptual, and analytic learners need to cultivate their concrete perception and active mode of processing is a significant point that I see as altogether missing in the approach of the NASSP "Learning Styles Profile" and others like it.

A narrow conception of learning and knowing is not maintained only in our schools. Our culture in general has a tendency to rely too heavily upon abstract conceptualization to the exclusion of more direct modes of knowing. True learning means learning how to learn, so that one's learning increases and deepens throughout one's life. According to the Kolb-Mcarthy model, learning involves a cyclical process that begins with concrete experience, then flows toward reflective observation on to abstract conceptualization, then to active experimentation and back to concrete experience. Or, as McCarthy puts it more poetically:

The movement is from experiencing
to reflecting,
to conceptualizing,
to tinkering and problem solving
to integrating new learning into the self

The movement involves a constant
balancing and rebalancing
between
being in experience and analyzing experience,
between subjective and objective,
between connected and separate,
between being and knowing (p. 60)

Each pole of Kolb's cross represents an extreme approach. If one were to maintain a rigid adherence to concrete experience and never venture into the realm of abstract conceptualization, one's perspective of the world would be severely limited. The same
holds true for all the others. Ideally, a person develops a balance between these different perspectives and learns to use each mode in the appropriate way at the appropriate time.

Learning how to move smoothly through the complete cycle in every learning experience gives the learner a depth of understanding that is otherwise impossible. All too often in our fast-paced, consumer-oriented culture we learn things merely as concepts and then expect that we can carry them into action without going through a process of further learning. Real knowledge is not something that can be 'fed-in' to the learner like entering data into a computer. There is no such thing as knowledge, a static noun, analogous to the data fed into a computer. There is the interactive process of knowing. As McCarthy puts it, learning is the personal experience of making meaning. Below, I have copied a diagram from McCarthy's book, which illustrates the learning cycle principle in a far more clear and direct manner than is possible through the linear communication process of words alone.

Figure 7.
Assimilating Experience to Accommodating Concepts
A further dimension of style that McCarthy adds to this four-phase learning cycle is what she calls right left mode techniques. This, of course, refers to the different modes of the right and left hemispheres of the brain. Some scientists tell us that the left hemisphere tends to think in words while the right hemisphere tends to think directly in sensory images. They say the left is the verbal, sequential and rational; the kind of thinking that is rewarded in the conventional school system. The right is non-verbal, simultaneous and intuitive. As McCarthy says, ‘School teaches us not to trust our right mode of knowing; so our subsequent use of it makes us feel guilty, less rational, less intelligent.’

McCarthy’s approach to right/left mode techniques seems to be a clever adaptation of the theory into practice. She advocates that every phase of the learning process should have both a right and a left mode component in order to have full learning occur for everyone. Once again those who prefer one mode over the other have the opportunity to succeed in their own mode as well as being challenged by the other mode. And more importantly, perhaps, everyone has a chance to deepen what they learn through right/left mode reinforcement.

Finally, McCarthy adds perceptual modalities, as a matter of course, to her systematic recipe for teaching all learning styles. She acknowledges three modalities: visual, auditory and kinesthetic. All of these are used time and time again within the rich diversity of teaching techniques advocated within the complete 4 MAT learning cycle process. Below are three more cycle charts from McCarthy’s book. These present the complete 4 MAT system. One is more generic, while the other two have been adapted for specific curricula.
The Complete 4MAT System Model

Concrete Experience

Active Experimentation

Reflective Observation

Practice and Personalization

Abstract Conceptualization

Figure 8.(i) The Complete 4MAT System Model (General)

Figure 8.(ii) The Complete 4MAT System Model Reading Primary
In reviewing and comparing these two learning style systems I have aspired to help the reader become familiar with some learning style concepts, while also applying a critical perspective. If we apply the learning style concept to understanding the differences between the NASSP Learning Styles Profile and McCarthy's 4 MAT system, what do we find?

It is easy to see that the L.S.P. comes out of the conventional North American cultural perspective, which has understood education as predominantly a pursuit of verbal, sequential, rational, and conceptual skills. Keefe and his colleagues seem to be themselves what McCarthy would call type two learners. Though they partially acknowledge the other styles, they do so only from the biased perspective of their own (type two) style. With a basic distrust of any thinking approach that is not at least clothed in 'scientific' language and procedures, Keefe and his colleagues are 'narrow categorizers.' Because of this narrow notion of what should be included in the conceptual category of learning style, they
have excluded from their inquiry important insights from the dual-brain theories, as well as the theoretical work of Jung (1971) and his followers such as Lawrence (1979).

McCarthy sees education more as training in a full spectrum of styles. Her model regards the non-verbal, concrete, experiential, active and intuitive modes of learning as equally valid as the verbal, conceptual, reflective, and rational modes usually valued in school.

The designers of the L.S.P. regard the traditional school curriculum as a constant and then measure the students learning styles in relation to that. They ask the question: Do students have a style that fits with the traditional school curriculum, or one that leaves them feeling frustrated and left out? McCarthy, on the other hand, sees the various learning styles as the fundamental constant and devises plans to change curricula to pull them into line with how students learn. She asks the question: How can we change the way we teach so that all students can broaden the way they learn?

The 4 MAT system encourages teachers to broaden their teaching skills so that they can teach in a different style for each of the eight steps of the learning cycle. To do this well, teachers need to practice it over and over until the eight steps of the cycle become second nature. I feel that a good teacher training program would allow teachers the luxury to do this kind of practice. However, some teachers may do well with this, while others may find it difficult and awkward. The danger here is that many teachers may fall into the same trap as the designers of the NASSP Learning Styles Profile and interpret other learning styles through the lens of their own.

Is it possible for all teachers to experience firsthand what it is like to be a type one learner, or a type two learner, a type three, or type four? Is there a way to unlock ourselves from our own personal type of perceptual bias and processing style? McCarthy’s system for curriculum design is useful as an outer guideline. However, from the contemplative perspective that cultivates intuitive wisdom, McCarthy’s 4 MAT system lacks a method for bringing teachers directly into the experience of what it is like to feel, perceive, think, and
act from a vantage point that is different from their own habitual style. This is the experience that contemplative training in the five styles of elemental wisdom engenders. From the contemplative perspective, we all have a potential to experience our reality from a variety of different vantage points. Usually we choose not to. However, if the proper conditions are met in the form of the contemplative practice, it is easy for all of us to taste at least our own particular version of each of the five elemental styles. These styles, unlike McCarthy’s, are based in the direct experience of emotional energy.

If teachers in training are to embark upon a journey of understanding themselves then they should have a sense of how this kind of contemplative training in the five wisdoms fits into their own developmental process and the developmental process of the children that they serve. What follows is a look at the transpersonal developmental psychology of Ken Wilber. Wilber’s scheme of the full spectrum of development from birth to spiritual enlightenment gives us a context for understanding how a contemplative or meditative approach to learning styles as intuitive wisdom might be an appropriate method for training teachers.

From this perspective, the developmental journey for young adults involves a need first to identify and process any unresolved childhood issues that have become trapped as emotional fixations or self-sabotaging ego states. Once these various ego states are integrated to work in harmony, the journey that Jung refers to as transcendence begins. The higher phases of adult development have to do with transcending the limited boundaries of what we tend to regard as a personal self, to open to a dynamic awareness of one’s interconnectedness with others through learning how to transform emotions into elemental wisdom.
CHAPTER 6 NOTES

1. Both of these systems came into being as a result of conferences that brought together leading persons of diverse perspectives in the learning style field. The NASSP co-sponsored a major national conference with St. John's University of New York in 1981. Subsequently, the NASSP formed a national task force that set out to assemble a diagnostic instrument for assessing learning styles that could be utilized easily in a school setting. The 4MAT system arose when Bernice McCarthy, a teacher with more than twenty years of classroom experience, recognized and classified, as she says, 'striking similarities' between eighteen different researchers. Then, in 1979, McCarthy called a conference in Chicago that pulled together a diverse group of learning style experts and advocates. The list of participants reads like a Who's Who in the field of learning styles, including such researchers as Dr. Jerre Levy, Dr. David Kolb and Dr. Anthony Gergoric, as well as the artist Dr. Betty Edwards and even a dancer, Elizabeth Wetzig.

2. Science vs. other ways from wholeness principle.

3. This list of subscales used in the Learning Style Profile can also be found in Keefe (1986), pp. 8-12.

4. The style of thinking that organizes things into polar opposites is an inherent aspect of our dualistic consciousness that separates everything according to a simple binary logic of this opposed to not this. From the perspective of a unitive experience, or the non-dual wisdom that sees all things in their distinct separateness and individual detail within the context of their interdependent union with the totality, polar opposites are a simplistic misconception of how things work. The notion of polarity denies the interdependence of things, which is more accurately expressed in the notion of complementarity, as in the Taoist view of yin and yang. Guenther (1989) explains this notion briefly while reviewing some of the difficulties that Westerners have in comprehending the highest level of Tibetan Buddhist philosophy known as Dzog-Chen, the great completeness: ‘The third difficulty [in presenting Dzog-Chen to the Westerner] is that in view of the fact that process thinking does not know of any sharp separation between opposite aspects of reality and bases itself on the principle of complementarity, in which the opposites include each other, these opposites have to be thought together, not in the sense of a stale synthesis, but in a dynamic unity. This is, psychologically speaking, an extremely difficult operation; all our ingrained mental habits revolt against it; and the prevailing reductionism in objectifying representational thinking makes us continue acting in the manner so picturesquely described in the Rin-chent sprungs-pa: ‘It is like (trying to) force a piece of cloth into the eye of a needle, which has no place for it and does not allow it to move’ (Guenther, 1989, p. 185). If the mystical union of opposites occurs in the centre of the cross then perhaps the more mundane or earthly way of linking opposites in a practical process occurs in a circle that goes around the outer reaches of the cross. This is the way that McCarthy suggests teaching should proceed, in a circle around the opposites that joins them in a linking process. However, what her approach does not consider is the contemplative method of joining opposites through uncovering that primordial state of mind which transcends opposites in a dynamic experience of energetic stillness at the centre and non-dual cognition.

5. McCarthy, p. 73. Roger Sperry (1973) first observed and documented these significantly different modes of functioning in the left and right hemispheres of the brain while conducting his 'split-brain' research first with animals in the 1950s and later with epileptic patients in the 1960s. Sperry has this to say about the relevance of his work to education: ‘One important outcome is the increased insight and appreciation, in education and elsewhere, for the importance of non-verbal forms and components of learning, intellect, and communication. By the early 1970s it had already become evident, from the standpoint of brain research, that our educational system and modern urban society generally, with its heavy emphasis on linguistic communication and early training in the three R’s, tends increasingly to discriminate against the non-verbal half of the brain, which has its own perceptual-mechanical-spatial mode of apprehension and reasoning. The amount of training given to right hemisphere functions in our public school traditionally has been almost negligible, compared to that devoted to the specialties of the left hemisphere' (Sperry, 1985b). Ever since Sperry first published his findings there has been a plethora of literature that has popularized ideas about the differences between the right and left sides of the brain. A fascination with brain hemispheres has swept through the educational community like wildfire in the past decade or more. Teachers and educators seem to have ridden a roller-coaster of high expectations and disappointments with these theories and their applications. For some practical approaches, see Williams (1983) and Meister Vitale (1982). Some of the attempts to apply brain research to education have tended to be overly simplistic. Keefe, writing in support of the NASSP
Learning Styles Profile (1987), uses the term 'dichotomania' in referring to popular literature which he says falsely equates hemispheric differences with hemispheric biases in learners. The prominent neuropsychologist J. Levy (1982, 1985) has written much to dispel some of the misunderstandings. He cites research to show that we use our whole brain in every possible kind of activity, be it thinking, writing, talking, painting a picture or playing the piano. It does seem conclusive then, as Keefe argues, that all learners use both hemispheres for most learning experiences. Furthermore, research by Trevathan (1990) has shown that hemispheric specialization is not absolute but that either hemisphere can take on characteristics of the other and operate in that mode for a time. Finally, theories that explain brain functioning to be more like a hologram (Pietsch 1981; Pribram, 1991; Wilber, 1982; Talbot, 1991) argue that any part of the brain can take on the specialized functions of the whole brain, which throws into question any brain mapping theory that tends to isolate brain functions as exclusive to a particular brain location. Considering these inconsistencies in the dual brain theories, Keefe and his colleagues, while ironically extolling the virtues of 'whole-brain education,' decided to omit almost entirely any right and left mode stylistic considerations from their Learning Styles Profile. To my way of thinking, they have thrown the baby out with the bathwater. What they have failed to realize is that despite the fact that most tasks require both sides of the brain, it is still useful to broaden our conception of learning to include both modes. Whether or not learners have a hemispheric bias that can be presently measured by brain researchers is irrelevant. When simple observation tells us that learners tend to be either more verbal and rational or more spatial and intuitive, that speaks for itself. And since conventional school curriculum is so heavily weighted in favour of verbal and rational processing, all students, and some more than others, suffer from an unbalanced learning experience.
Chapter 7
Evolution Towards Spirit

• Reconnecting • Rhythms of consciousness • Gebser’s five modes • The controversy of hierarchy • Development: just an idea or the way of nature • Psychologies of willfulness and psychologies of willingness • Is our universe dead or alive? • Dissipative structures • Life defines itself • Piaget’s equilibration • Enfolded concentric spheres from lower to higher order • The great chain of being • The paradox of non-duality • The seamless coat of the universe • We arrive where we started • Freud’s confusion and the ‘pre/trans’ fallacy • No boundary: the primal repression • The double bind in the face of eternity • Symbolic substitutes • Transformation: dissatisfaction, disidentification, death, rebirth and a new identification • Are you just rearranging your furniture on this floor or are you moving upstairs? • Symbols hint about downstairs and upstairs • Why not take the elevator?

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To see a world in a grain of sand
And a heaven in a wild flower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand
And eternity in an hour

William Blake

The creative principle of the universe and its organization and intelligence is not an external principle but an internal one. All of the past that we can ever know is contained in the world at this instant.

John Platt

As a six-year-old, perched on the narrow ridges of free-standing red sandstone slabs high above the dwarfed junipers and tall ponderosas, I experienced a sense of oneness with rock and sky. Developmental psychologists (Mahler, Pine & Bergmen, 1975; Piaget, 1977; Loevinger, 1976; Neumann, 1973) generally acknowledge that childhood development begins out of a similar undifferentiated consciousness. Yet these theorists
have not acknowledged the value of reconnecting with this undifferentiated mode of experience throughout the life cycle.

I remember that once the deep sense of oneness passed, while sitting high up on the red rocks, I was moved by what I have called the rhythm of stillness. In this state, I could feel a rhythm of the sky as separate from the rhythm of the rocks and the rhythm of the trees as distinct from the unique song expressed in the flight of a magpie. Later, climbing down from my perch to run along the narrow trails and dry creekbeds, I found myself talking to the ponderosas and the magpies, as well as making up secret names for each rock and each special place. The ants had stories to tell me, and so did the complex patterns in the tree bark. All alone on those summer afternoons, I was free to explore not only the natural surroundings of my physical environment but also the natural shifting phases of consciousness. For the essence of my experience was mind itself, and not just my mind but the interconnected big mind that surrounded me in its waves with their various rhythms from crest to trough to crest again. Mind’s waves keep rhythms of expansion and contraction, arising and dissolving. These are the rhythms of consciousness, the rhythms of life and death, the rhythms of the elements.

An infinite variety of rhythms of mind corresponds to the infinite varieties of experience. Yet, similar to the way we perceive different frequencies of light as colour, these rhythms of experience tend to come in clumps of similar quality, distinct from clumps of a different quality. There seem to be categories of experience which are qualitatively different from each other. For me, sitting on the rock absorbed in the oneness of rock and sky was different from noticing the distinct songs of the rocks, the trees and the sky; and this, too, was different from using magic words and noticing the magic in the tree bark patterns. Finally, all of these are different from sitting at a desk at school, reading or trying to read. What would happen if teachers were as free to explore the diversity of rhythms in their minds as most children seem to be?
Two developmental theorists, Gebser (1985) and Wilber (1980), have initiated a different perspective concerning the overall context and meaning of the various different states of consciousness that tend to emerge as part of the developmental process. Writing in the 1940s, Gebser was ahead of his time in his ecological sensitivity and holistic approach. He incorporated this kind of thinking into his comprehensive study of the history of consciousness by rejecting the common notion of higher and lower levels or stages of development. In his thinking, all the apparently distinct forms of consciousness are part of the ever-present potential of human nature, although some forms tend to dominate others during certain periods or stages of growth and development. From Gebser’s perspective, a specific structure of consciousness is either latent or expressed, and no one form is inherently better or worse than another. Each structure of consciousness has its effective and defective possibilities, and when applied in a balanced way each serves a function for the good of the whole.

Gebser lists five forms of consciousness, four of which relate closely to what I have sketched above from my memory of being a six-year-old climbing and playing among the red rocks and then going to school. The fifth is one that I believe teachers could cultivate through meditation and contemplative practice:

1. **Archaic**: characterized by a sense of oneness and identity with origin.
2. **Magic**: experienced as an emerging sense of self dispersed over the world of phenomena and apprehending the power of our interconnected nature.
3. **Mythic**: a consciousness that gives voice to the intuitions of magic through words, poetry, songs, stories, theatre, dance and art.
4. **Mental**: rational reflection, abstraction and the assertion of a self as the independent ego.
5. **Integral**: characterized by the freedom to choose the appropriate mode of consciousness in order to bring about a wise balance of the other four.
My thesis that teachers would be more effective if they could practice contemplative exercises to open their minds to an experience of the five styles of elemental wisdom seems to be well supported by Gebser's ideas that distinct forms of consciousness are part of the ever-present potential of human nature. To develop what Gebser refers to as integral wisdom, teachers need to move beyond the strong tendency in our culture to regard the mental and rational mode as the superior mode of knowing.

Although I agree with Gebser that the various different kinds of consciousness are always available, and that integrating them in a balanced and insightful manner is what we need to do, especially if we propose to serve others as guides and teachers, I tend to see the integral mode as more advanced, since it is more inclusive. This again raises the controversial issue of a hierarchical progression of stages. Wilber's 'full spectrum' developmental scheme (1980) has been criticized for being hierarchical. Is hierarchy necessarily a bad thing? Although I support an approach which aims to question much of what has been perpetuated as part of a pervasive patriarchal imbalance, including hierarchical systems in social, political and spiritual spheres, and though I wholeheartedly support searching for alternative principles and structures of organization, it seems that we cannot deny that there are higher and lower levels of development. Though an infant and a sage may both experience Gebser's 'Archaic' consciousness, there is a considerable difference between their capacity to articulate and utilize such an experience. As Campbell (1949) reminds us, it is the hero's capacity to return with a gift garnered from the depths of the psychological and spiritual heroic adventure which allows for blessings of prosperity and transformation to descend upon the rest of a society.

Wilber grounds his developmental theory in a philosophy of non-duality. His holistic theory is an elegant conceptualization describing in detail how consciousness arises out of the non-dual ground to diversify and individuate in phases toward eventually merging into the non-dual ground with total awareness and wisdom. Since the contemplative practice of evoking the five elemental wisdoms is based in a non-dual awareness of the
energy of emotions, Wilber's perspective is useful as a theoretical model of human development that is aligned with the non-dualistic philosophy of elemental wisdom. Furthermore, there is a direct relationship between the developmental phases that Wilber describes and the distinct qualities of each elemental wisdom. Since Wilber has made a correlation between the traditional Buddhist description of our moment-to-moment rebirth of consciousness and the more long-term developmental process within the life cycle, we have a holographic model which brings together consciousness, development, and wisdom styles. Just as a hologram contains the whole within each part, so this model describes how we contain within each instant of consciousness the same pattern of developmental phases which unfold throughout our lifetime. As Blake speaks of seeing the world in a grain of sand and holding eternity in an hour, we can also learn to see the developmental stages of childhood and the elemental wisdoms of the sages unfolding in our minds in every instant.

From this perspective, any relationship we have to our environment is influenced by these five elemental qualities associated with different modes of knowing and phases in the development of consciousness. The words 'relationship' and 'environment' in the above sentence betray a dualistic bias in our language and our way of thinking. If we think of experience as a fluid process without a division between subject and object, what I am trying to describe might be better put as 'experience unfolds as the play of the five elements.' Such a play of elemental energies I have described before as a rhythm in the stillness, a small boy's experience of inner and outer worlds merged.

The work of Wilber is unique in two ways. The first is that he takes a very broad approach in defining his developmental stages so that they simultaneously include all the various lines of development, including affective, linguistic, cognitive, moral, ego, object-relations, etc. The second aspect that makes Wilber's work particularly unique is that he extends the stages of development beyond the so-called normal levels of development in conventional psychology. Drawing on the richness of hundreds of diverse sources ranging from psychoanalysis and Piaget's theories to the ancient systems of Vedantic, Yoga and
Buddhist psychology, Wilber convincingly presents what he calls the deep structures of universal or cross-cultural development. These deep structures define a continuum that spans the developmental stages of conventional Western psychology and beyond, into the more subtle realms of development embodied in the world's great contemplative and meditative traditions.

Before moving on to an overview of Wilber's full-spectrum model of development in this chapter and a summery of its early stages in the next, I would like to preface it with a look at what we mean when we say 'development.' Ideally, when we speak of development we imply a natural process. We tend to want to believe that this process is rooted in the very fabric of nature, as contrasted with a process directed towards some 'man-made' goal of human perfection or ideal. The all-confident cry for progress of the previous one hundred years or more has today been muffled by an undeniable awareness of what that drive for progress has wrought, in terms of on-going global pollution, social, cultural and economic poverty, political authoritarianism and the continuing proliferation of war and weapons. As we have seen through Bateson's idea of 'pathologies of epistemology,' the highest ideals and best intentions of human thinking and striving can be based on fundamental misperceptions and faulty reasoning, arbitrary and wholly divorced from what is ultimately healthy for ourselves and our planet.10

In many ways, the very conception of developmental stages of psychological growth smacks of what Gerald May (1980) calls willful psychology. Concepts of hierarchy and stage development make it difficult to avoid an attitude of goal orientation and competitive climbing. This attitude gives rise to a forceful, aggressive approach which backfires and can be destructive. Natural development, it seems, would progress more with what May refers to as an attitude of willingness rather than willfulness. Willingness, to quote May (1982), 'implies a surrendering of one's self-separateness, an entering into, an immersion into the deepest process of life itself, a commitment to participation in a process larger than oneself' (p. 6). This commitment to a process larger than oneself, by giving in
to the process of nature altogether and finding one's own true nature within that, seems to be the central point. As we shall see in Wilber's model, meditation and contemplative exercises are one way to facilitate this natural process. In what follows, I would like to review some background to this notion of development as a process embedded in nature.

Does it make sense to think of the on-going development of our consciousness as human beings as part of a natural evolutionary continuum, a product of the same on-going process of transformation that first formed life on earth? People such as Smuts (1926), Bergson (1975), Teilhard de Chardin (1959), Gurdjieff (1950-1963), Roszak (1975, 1993), Ouspensky (1977), Wilber (1980) and Murphy (1992) have all argued that it does make sense. Concerning the evolutionary process, many questions arise: First of all, has this process come to an end in the evolution of homo sapiens and human consciousness as we know it today? Or, if not, where do we go from here? Where is this natural process taking us now? What is the essence of this process? If we want to understand what learning is and what constitutes growth and development we need to ask: What is the engine of this process? What makes it move along at all? And ultimately, we may find ourselves tangled in an ancient metaphysical conundrum, asking: Does matter give rise to mind and spirit? Or does spirit and mind give rise to matter?11

A non-dualistic approach to wisdom based on a direct experience of the five elemental energy patterns is based on a Buddhist approach that takes a middle way between these two polarized metaphysical perspectives, the strictly material and the strictly spiritual.12 It is a view that sees matter and mind arising together. 'Big mind,' as Suzuki (1970) calls it, includes matter. For us, as contemporary Westerners steeped in the materialistic view which has been so popular in our rational and scientifically believing culture, it is rather difficult to comprehend exactly what this means.

In an attempt to answer some of these questions concerning evolution and the development of consciousness and to evoke some understanding of this Buddhist position hovering between materialism and spiritualism, let us make a brief excursion into a
landscape of ideas, now popular in certain scientific circles, concerning the unpredictable and playful quality of what we tend to call at present ‘open systems.’ As I lightly touch upon some of these ideas, I ask you to consider them in historical context, by entertaining the thought that they arise from a culture in transition. For like Capra (1982) and Roszak (1975, 1993), I hold a view that our Western culture, originally rooted in spiritualism and subsequently embedded in a materialistic outlook, is now moving toward a syntheses that is completely different from either of these. Presently our culture is reaching beyond itself, to intuit something that is hard to name, hard to measure, hard to conceive. We might tend to label this intuitive awareness as spiritual or metaphysical, to use old-fashioned terms, but for some, these words are loaded with irrelevant or negative associations. What is important is that it is an intuition of that which is all around us and within us and is infinitely more powerful than us, yet not separate from us. It is something beyond our willful tendencies and beyond our small-minded desire to predict and control.

In our time, we are beginning to see our universe as dynamic and even alive. Our universe which was previously described in mechanical terms as a kind of great clockwork composed of dead matter moving around according to Newton’s laws now appears as a complex patterning of interlocking open systems described more in terms borrowed from biology’s complex descriptions of life than through any gross mechanical metaphor. As Hayward (1987) says:

We can apply this way of thinking to all magnitudes: elementary particles have all the requirements of open, dynamic systems, as do organisms and the planet Earth, as do galaxies. (p. 231)

The essence of evolution from this living universe perspective seems to have something to do with these interconnecting open systems. Considering the properties of open systems, Ilya Prigogine (1984), the Nobel prize-winning chemist, has spawned a revolution in our understanding of how order comes about out of chaos.
The notion of entropy in classical physics states that in any closed system energy will spread itself out evenly throughout the system in a chaotic manner such that order or structure will progressively degrade into chaos. Prigogine has shown, however, that for open systems this does not hold true. Instead, open systems have an inherent possibility of evolving to states of increasing complexity and order. Prigogine explains that when an open system at a stable energy level receives a large enough change in input, it will either collapse to a lower, more chaotic level or rise to a higher level of order. These systems which change internal structures towards higher energy and greater degree of self-organization he calls 'dissipative structures,' dissipative because they dissipate entropy or chaos.

The development of progressively more complex self-organizing open systems could be an explanation for how life first began out of the primordial 'soup' of organic chemicals on earth. Indeed, some of the new awareness derived from a systems way of thinking in biology has produced a definition of life based on the principles of self-organization. Maturana and Varela (1987) define life as the organization of components into a unity such that the components continually recreate that unity. The new definitions of life have more to do with process, pattern and dynamic activity than the presence of a particular substance such as DNA. A definition of life given by Feinberg and Shapiro (1980) also speaks in terms of order in an open system:

Life is fundamentally the activity of a biosphere. A biosphere is a highly ordered system of matter and energy characterized by complex cycles that maintain or gradually increase the order of the system through an exchange of energy with its environment. (p. 147)

From a similar perspective, Lovelock (1979) has proposed that the earth itself is a living system. Thinking of the entire earth as a single thriving organism, and thinking of the universe as filled with interrelating open systems, each with the potential of evolving a higher order of self-regulating organization, begins to alter our understanding of the natural process we call 'evolution.' Now, take into account, once more, what Bateson (1972) has
said about not separating the organism or species from its environment when considering the evolutionary process, 'The unit of evolutionary survival turns out to be identical with the unit of mind' (p. 483). Thus, we begin to see that there is a natural process of gradually increasing order and structure at work in the universe. This principle of structure and order we can call 'mind,' and its process of moving from less to more complex and inclusive structures of organization we call 'evolution.'

The question that now arises is: How does this principle of evolution or the organization of progressively complex, self-regulating systems manifest in the unfolding development of human consciousness and cognition? The answer is actually quite simple, yet some might find it shocking. For evolution seems to manifests within consciousness in very much the same way that we have followed it up until now.

The tradition in the West of separating mind and matter has led us to believe that consciousness is either a result of brain structure (materialism) or an aspect of ourselves which we hold to be divine (spiritualism). Either way, it is something which separates us from our physical environment, something which makes us different from the lifeless matter that bounces around the universe. However from the perspective that I am taking consciousness is merely a word that we use to describe a certain phase or set of phases sliced out from a greater dynamic of order, disorder and transformation in the universe.

Piaget's theories explaining the unfolding process and stages of cognition in children are also based on the open systems model. One of Piaget's (1964) most vital theoretical concerns was what he termed 'equilibrium,' which he defines as, 'the compensation resulting from the activities of the subject in response to external intrusion.' He goes on to say, 'It follows that equilibrium thus defined is compatible with the concept of an open system' (p. 101).

Later in the same essay, Piaget explains that it is more the process of 'equilibration' that is significant as the dynamic force propelling cognitive development, rather than the stable state in open system that is equilibrium. According to Piaget, equilibration is the
regulatory mechanism adjusting the activities of accommodation and assimilation in order to maintain the integrity between internal and external systems. In other words, to achieve the transition from one stable state in open system to another, higher-order, stable state, there must necessarily be a process whereby the stability of the earlier stage dissolves and a new stability occurs. When more subtle and complex aspects of the environment can no longer be assimilated into a less complex structure, a conflict or disequilibrium ensues. Then, through accommodation, a new stability or equilibrium is organized.¹⁵

Equilibration, then, is the process that brings about the collapse or disordering of one system in steady state and simultaneously the process that evolves a new, higher-order, more inclusive system in steady state. To put it more simply, equilibration is the process of making the change from one cognitive stage to another. To summarize, Piaget's editor, David Elkind (Piaget, 1964), puts it this way, 'equilibration is an overriding principle of mental development, in the sense that all mental growth progresses toward ever more complex and stable levels of organization.'¹⁶ The process could also be described as a kind of death and rebirth. When an open system reaches a critical point of disequilibrium it dies or becomes chaotic and disorganized then, and only then, can it transform, finding a higher level of self-organization in a new birth.

Coming back to the Universe as an infinite set of interlocking open systems, order arising from chaos and the non-dual link between environment and consciousness, the South African statesman philosopher Jan Smuts proposed back in 1926 that the universe is a series of interacting wholes. Smuts saw these wholes as hierarchical or somewhat like concentric spheres, like nesting bowls or those Russian dolls with a series of progressively smaller dolls inside. Each whole is enwrapped, enfolded within an even greater whole. According to Smuts, the universe is not a mindlessly static inert whole. Rather, it is an energetically dynamic and creative process producing higher and higher level wholes, ever more inclusive and more highly organized.

Wilber (1980) cites the philosophy of Smuts and then goes on to say:
The holistic evolution of nature— which produces everywhere higher and higher wholes— shows up in the human psyche as development or growth. The same force that produced man from amoebas produces adults from infants. That is, a person’s growth from infancy to adulthood is simply a miniature version of cosmic evolution. Or we might say, psychological growth or development in humans is simply a microcosmic reflection of universal growth on the whole, and has the same goal the unfolding of ever higher-order unities and integrations. (p.1.)

In this way, we can see that in Wilber’s theory, what Prigogene has revealed as the development of order and structure at the crude level of chemical systems continues right through to the development of human beings and their consciousness. Although new developments in science have perhaps made such an idea more acceptable for those of us steeped in the culture of the Western scientific materialism, this idea is hardly a new one. On the contrary, it goes back into antiquity and has been known for ages as the ‘Great Chain of Being.’ In Western thought, the Great Chain of Being has been understood as a universal sequence of hierarchic levels, moving from matter to body to mind to soul to spirit. Wilber, following Hixon (1978), Kahn (1977), Schoun (1975) and Smith (1976), has resurrected this notion of the Great Chain of Being as descriptive of the overall scheme of evolution, human development and the path of transcendence. Now, to be more specific, we might ask: What is the actual format of this developmental process in human beings?

To paraphrase Thomas McCarthy (1978), the stage model (widely used as a scheme in developmental psychology) holds that each stage is a structural whole, qualitatively different from the others, occurring in an invariant sequence or hierarchical manner of increasing complexity, where each successive stage encompasses the former, preserving its elements but transforming them and re-integrating them into the broader perspective of the new whole. These aspects of the stage model hold true for Freud’s stages in psychosexual development as well as in the cognitive studies of Piaget (1952) and Werner (1957), the ego development of Loevinger (1976) and Arieti (1967), in the object relations of
Mahler, Pine and Bergman (1975) as well as for Maslow (1968), and in the moral studies of Kohlberg (1964). All of these theorists agree in progressive stages of increasing differentiation, integration and unity.

Wilber asks where can we find examples of higher order development. For this, Wilber follows the example of such thinkers as Bergson (1975), Huxley (1944), Toynbee (1972), James (1958), Teilhard de Chardin (1964) and Maslow (1971), in regarding the world’s great mystics and sages as examples of the higher levels of development. Furthermore, Wilber follows the perspective of the ‘perennial philosophy’ which becomes the context within which he frames his understanding of the developmental journey as a whole.

According to Wilber (1980) and Wilber, Engler and Brown (1986), the world’s contemplative and meditative traditions have also conceived of spiritual development, or development of awareness towards enlightenment, as occurring in stages. The overall structure of these stages on the contemplative path to enlightenment resemble the stages conceived by the developmental theorists described above, except that they occur on a level of development not usually acknowledged by these conventional theories. Daniel Brown, in Wilber, Engler and Brown (1986) has made an in-depth study of the stages of meditation to suggest that their deep structures show some tendencies to be cross-cultural and universally applicable. Studies into the stages of Christian contemplation by Chirban, again in Wilber, Engler and Brown (1986) have revealed similar deep structures.

Wilber (1982), in accordance with what I have presented thus far, explains that the core notion of the perennial philosophy is the notion of ‘non-duality’:

which means that reality is neither one nor many, neither permanent nor dynamic, neither separate nor unified, neither pluralistic nor holistic. It is entirely and radically above and prior to any form of conceptual elaboration, it is strictly unqualifiable. (p. 249, 250)

Wilber tells us that the only way to begin to conceive of this non-dual reality with language and normal human understanding is through paradox. The analogy of the cave
from classical philosophy is still useful for grasping this paradoxical nature of reality. There is the absolute light of reality outside the cave and the manifest shadows dancing on the inner walls of the cave. Ultimately, these qualities, light and shadow, are not two. The shadows could not appear if it were not for the light.

As we have seen in Buddhist philosophy and psychology, this inconceivable aspect of reality is termed shunyata, which literally means ‘emptiness’. This emptiness as we have seen is not an absence or blankness. On the contrary, Buddhist philosophy and the Buddhist contemplative experience of reality understand this emptiness to be paradoxically a fullness of the interconnected totality. Reality is full of sensory experience but empty of our limiting concepts about that experience that tend to reify it. Our experience of solid material existence is simply one of many different ways to organize consciousness and perception. Buddhism refers to this full/emptiness paradox as experienced at different levels with different terms. Appearance/emptiness refers to sensory experience more or less as we know it while luminosity/emptiness evokes an experience of perception as pure energy and bliss/emptiness an experience of pure mind.

Mahayana Buddhist philosophy speaks of two truths: absolute truth, which is unconditioned and unchanging, and relative truth, which is the interdependence of all things seen as a process constantly in flux. From the ultimate view, these two truths are also not two, but one indivisible truth.

To further describe this paradox of reality, Wilber calls up the image used by Whitehead, ‘the seamless coat of the universe’ and goes on to explain that just as our feet, toes, arms and fingers are different entities yet part of the same body, so all aspects, qualities, things and events in the universe are part of one fundamental whole. As Wilber (1980) says:

The ultimate psychology is a psychology of fundamental wholeness,... For this wholeness is what is real and all that is real. A radically separate, isolated and bounded entity does not exist
anywhere. There are no seams in the world, in things in people or in
God. (p. 101-102)

This is, as we have already established, the ground of elemental wisdom, the
seamless web of totality. It is also according to Wilber the basic ground out of which all
developmental stages arise and the final culmination of the developmental process. It is the
alpha and the omega, or as T. S. Eliot says:

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.21

It is for this reason, as I explained earlier, that Wilber depicts the full spectrum of
development as a circle arising from this ground and returning to it (see figure 9). Because
the ground of the development and its culmination are ultimately one, there is a kind of
thread of continuity which runs through the whole developmental journey. Identifying this
thread gives us a ground for intuition, a link to other stages and makes the journey some­
how more tolerable, fostering a sense of humour. Nevertheless, it is equally important to
bear in mind the other side of the paradox. Despite the fact that the ground and culmination
of the journey are one, everything that happens in between is nevertheless necessary and
significant.

As discussed earlier, Wilber places the turning point of development at the top of
the 'outward arc,' where the ego (which at no point has any substantial existence) has
ripened to its fullest potential. At this point, the need to seek development beyond the
illusory boundaries of ego begins to manifest as existential anxiety and spiritual yearning.
At this stage, the limitations of ego and the erroneous belief in a self become increasingly
problematic, forcing development to proceed on what Wilber refers to as the 'inward arc.'
The inward arc is a journey that transforms consciousness into higher-order structures with
more subtle and inclusive forms of awareness which go beyond the rigid dualistic concepts
of self and other, toward a non-dual wisdom awareness of the interconnected totality.
Having acknowledged both the outward and inward arcs of development, as well as the ground consciousness from which they arise and to which they return, a certain reverse symmetry of the two arcs is apparent. Because the ground and the culmination of development are one in their non-dual nature, there are many apparent similarities between the early phases of development and highest levels of contemplative or spiritual development. These apparent similarities have long been the focus of much confusion, both in psychology and spirituality.

The outward arc, which includes all the conventional psychological theories of development, is actually an elaborate construction of a delusion of separate identity. This elaborate and painstaking construction of a delusion is nevertheless a necessary process in the developmental cycle. The illusion of separateness could be likened to a painting or drawing where a figure stands out against the ground but is nevertheless still part of the
same canvas or paper. Likewise, the self stands out from the primordial and fundamental wholeness. The separate self is a delusion because there is no reality other than this wholeness. Therefore, any sense of boundary between self and other, self and environment, self and nature, self and experience, is illusory yet in part necessary for the normal tasks of human life, such as brushing your teeth or talking to a student. Nevertheless, to see through the conventional boundaries between self and other as a transparent magic show of playful forms brings wisdom. Wilber (1980) says to erect and firmly believe in such a self boundary or barrier:

requires a constant expenditure of energy, a perpetual contracting or restricting activity.... This restricting obscures the prior wholeness.... and is the primal repression. It is the illusory repression of universal consciousness and its projection as an inside-self vs. an outside-world, a subject vs. an object. (p. 102)

The necessary phase of creating and clinging to the illusion of a continuous sense of self gives rise to endless cycles of emotional drama, distraction, confusion and anxiety. This illusion appears real because we have nothing else with which to compare it. However, despite the fact that this illusion of duality is particularly vivid, persistent, seemingly solid and convincing, there are tiny gaps in it. There are instances in all of our lives when the prior wholeness shines through, when the illusion is no longer convincing, when our fragile separate identity dissolves, when perception takes on a shimmering and vivid clarity and our small-minded concerns fall away. During these moments there is no self separate from experience as it unfolds.

When these instances occur there can be a sense of relaxation and openness, letting go of one’s self-created burden and the dramas that go with it. These instances can leave a lingering memory, a trace of something known before, and a certain strange yearning to know it again. These glimpses produce an intuition of the ultimate seamless web of the universe and our inseparability from it.
This intuition of the prior whole leads us on, draws us toward a reunion with the absolute. Yet, at the same time, we are terrified of this proposed union, this melting into the void, this giving up of our cherished boundaries, this letting go of our familiar habit of regarding ourselves as a distinct subject ‘in here’ distinct from objects ‘out there.’ We are terrified of this ego-death.

As separate ‘selves,’ we identify with our illusion of a distinct self. We identify with its history and reasons for being. When this sense of identity melts away and the boundaries between self and other begin to dissolve, this is experienced as the death of self. According to Wilber, we fear this death of our idea of self more than the death of our physical body. Physical death is only partial or a metaphor for the ultimate death of the separate self-sense altogether.

This is our peculiar predicament as human beings, which Wilber calls ‘the double bind in the face of eternity.’ We strive for wholeness with a strong intuition that the ultimate satisfaction, peace and unity we seek is right there under our noses, and at the same time we resist it with every bit of energy we can muster. For what is our greatest yearning is also our greatest fear.

Wilber’s term ‘Atman Project’ refers to that peculiarly structured struggle arising from this ultimate dilemma. The structure of this struggle has to do with continuously seeking the ultimate in ways that necessarily prevent it, and in turn, force the creation of symbolic substitutes. Wilber explains that these substitutes come in many forms: sex, food, money, fame, knowledge, power, spiritual attainment, etc. – all substitute gratifications or symbols that attract our displaced yearning for the ultimate unity.

Each individual caught in the narrow perspective of a constricted self-consciousness perceives the symbolic substitutes as real and meaningful, and is therefore bound to pursue them endlessly without ever achieving ultimate gratification. Yet the possibility of dying to the narrow perspective allows for a new, broader, more encompassing perception to develop. This broader perspective opens new pathways of perceiving, thinking, feeling and
being that are qualitatively different. It constitutes a transformation to the next higher stage of development. We can understand the dynamic process of development, from one stage to another, as occurring through a specific sequence of events. First comes the dissatisfaction with the present level. The substitute gratifications of that level no longer satisfy, due to increased awareness of their ultimately empty and unfulfilling nature. Or one senses the limitations of the present level as constricting, claustrophobic and frustrating. This leads to a disidentification with the substitute gratifications or objects of that level and a disidentification or death of the particular self at that level. It is perhaps important to point out here that this process is not smooth and painless but fraught with suffering and stormy weather. One becomes fed up, then gives up, feels lost, confused and sad. Then, only when one has disidentified with the previous level and died to the self of that level can there be transformation and identification with the next higher-order emergent structure. This cycle of death and rebirth is the essence of transformation at all stages and therefore also the essence of any process which gradually refines confused emotions into elemental wisdom.

At each stage, consciousness detaches from an exclusive identification with the lower structure, but it doesn’t actually throw that structure away; it simply no longer identifies with it. And once differentiated from the lower structure, consciousness, just as in Piaget’s (1952) model, can operate on that lower structure using the new-found tools gained in the higher-order structure. This process of unfolding into each higher-order unity in Wilber’s system reflects Piaget’s process of equilibration, while also including insights from Freud’s psychosexual stages, ego developmental theories, existential psychology and the perennial philosophy.

To explain the difference between what Wilber (1980) refers to as ‘deep structures’ and the ‘surface structures,’ he gives the simple analogy of a ten-story building to represent the entire structure of consciousness. Each floor of this building represents a ‘deep structure’ while the layout of the various rooms, the arrangement of furniture, office equipment and the kind of activities that go on there are all ‘surface structures.’ When intelligence or
consciousness moves about on one floor, rearranging the furniture on that floor, Wilber calls this ‘translation.’ It is translation because all experiences are translated into the mode of that floor or understood from the restrictions of that particular deep structure (similar to Piaget’s ‘assimilation’). However, when intelligence or consciousness moves up a floor, to an as-yet-unexplored ‘deep structure,’ this is ‘transformation’ (similar to Piaget’s ‘accommodation’).

A good example of transformation from one deep structure to another is the change in a child’s consciousness from a body ego identified with visceral instincts like hunger to what Wilber refers to as the ‘verbal membership ego’ identified with a higher-order unity involving language and more complex and inclusive cognitive abilities. This would constitute, in Piaget’s terms, a transformation from the ‘sensorimotor realms’ into the ‘pre-operational stage.’

Another helpful metaphor that Wilber suggests is to think of each deep structure as a different paradigm. Kuhn (1962) has explained that in the history of science, when the dominant modes of thinking within a particular era fail to explain a growing body of observations, a shift to a higher-order, yet an inclusive mode of understanding is developed. Human development proceeds in this same way, as Wilber says: ‘when translation fails, transformation ensues.’

Subtle aspects from other deep structures can enter into the mode of the present structure only in the form of symbols. Wilber makes a distinction between signs and symbols. Signs are those forms which point to or represent aspects and qualities within a given level of conscious awareness, whereas symbols point to or represent elements or qualities of awareness from different levels. This is in accordance with the generally accepted view of symbolism held by Jung (1967), Campbell (1949) and others. According to Huston Smith (1976): ‘Symbolism is the science of the relationship between different levels of reality.’ Therefore, in Wilber’s terms, the activity of translation operates with signs, while the process of transformation operates with symbols.
Freud's interpretation of dreams and the psychoanalytic theory of neurotic pathology likewise correspond to this view of symbols. In this view, a neurotic symptom is a symbol of a repressed impulse, fixated at a lower level of development. This impulse, repressed due to some trauma, is still urging to be satisfied in terms of the appropriate symbolic gratifications of that specific previous level. Therefore, it cannot be expressed in the appropriate signs of the present level (rational discourse, for example) but, rather, as a mysterious symbol from another realm of communication and cognition. Hence the strangeness of obsessive-compulsive behaviors such as hand-washing or other repetitive rituals.

Another example would be repressed anger fixated at a lower level, mistranslated as a beguiling symbol/symptom at higher levels. By projecting or displacing the symbol of repressed anger outward on to others, symptoms of anxiety, paranoia, chronic blaming of others and passive-aggressive tendencies result. Projecting the symbol of repressed anger inward toward the self manifests as depression. The person suffering from these symptoms cannot understand what is happening because the symptom/symbol is in a foreign language, that is, a language of a more primitive, deep structure that he/she cannot translate.

However, it would be a mistake to think, as classical Freudian psychoanalysis does, that all symbols arise out of the primary process and are always coupled with pathological symptoms. On the contrary, symbols can be powerful kernels of intuitive insight. Symbols can represent unconscious material from more primitive levels and can point to modes of awareness from higher-order levels of awareness. Myths, poetry, art, dance, theatre, religious rituals, and the complex symbolic systems of the world's great meditative and contemplative traditions are examples of the kinds of symbols that communicate ineffable wisdom from the more inclusive and higher-order structures of consciousness. Thus, if we are interested in how to nurture the developmental process, the proper presentation of symbols from the subsequent stage at the appropriate time is quite important.
Having reviewed Wilber's insights into the process and overall structure of development, it is useful to look at Wilber's characterization of the stages of development. However, it is important to point out that all theories of development have inherent limitations. The conceptual foundations of developmental stage theories and the model of growth implied in them are all sequential, temporal, linear, and rational. Because these theories are structured in this way, they make a lot of sense to those of us who like to order our perceptions in ways that are restricted within these narrow conceptual guide-lines. These orderly and rational theories are one way to explain the notion of life's journey. It seems easy to lose sight of this awareness in a kind of cultural blindness which tends to apply developmental theories as if they were the truth rather than merely a collection of helpful concepts. In the philosophy of the current ecological movement (Goldsmith, 1992), and in the advanced thinking in the fields of international relations (Lemkow, 1990), the notion of 'development' used to refer to the so-called 'developed nations,' and so-called 'underdeveloped nations' is being questioned as an invalid concept. 'Development' is a culturally loaded term that implies progress toward a pre-determined goal set by the materialistic and industrial world view. The modern tendency to fixate on the potential of future possibilities and constant movement into a rational and predictable future conditions a kind of blindness to resources of the present moment.

The idea of development altogether is unquestionably Western, rooted in the teleological thinking which Aristotle impressed into the Western psyche. It is nonetheless a useful way to introduce Westerners to the Buddhist notion of path (the fourth Noble Truth). However, it seems important to clarify a few points with respect to how these notions differ.

The scientific approach of developmental psychology with its abstractions and generalizations seems to be searching for universal laws of development, reminiscent of Newton's laws of physics. From a Buddhist perspective, the notion of path is somewhat different. First of all, path is only relevant as a subjective phenomena and unique to each
individual who experiences it. Secondly, philosophically speaking, there is a paradoxical existence/non-existence of stages on the path.

From the perspective of the Buddhist practitioner, there seems to be a path which involves various stages of development, a sequence of graduated meditation techniques, levels of wisdom awareness and higher and lower levels of realization. However, all of these are said to exist only as temporary and conditional structures occurring within specific situations and within a context. This overall context is what is referred to in Buddhist philosophy as the relative aspect of reality. This relative aspect of reality, from the ultimate perspective of enlightenment, the perspective of one who has woken up from the illusory dream of dualistic consciousness, is an illusion or maya. From the perspective of the Buddha’s enlightenment, the ultimate ground of being has never been stained or altered in the slightest by the grand illusions of samsara and nirvana, and each individual is not separate from this undivided ground. Nonetheless, we live within this paradox, and the illusion of different stages does have a kind of stubborn constancy, due to the strength of our habit patterns, whether they be those of an individual, a group, an entire nation, or all humanity. Once a pattern begins, it tends to repeat itself with a certain kind of inertia. For this reason, the Western psychological teachings on the structures of psychological development, though in no way fundamental truths, are useful as an upaya or skilful means because they describe in general what is usually the path of development within our materialistic, individually structured, and obsessive rational culture. However, since these are merely tendencies and not hard and fast laws, there are always exceptions, and ultimately the stage model could be by-passed altogether.

The insubstantial quality of our conditioned existence gives our experience of psychological development and path a kind of Swiss cheese quality, that is, a fairly steady illusion with lots of holes. The holes in this metaphor stand for those gaps in the sense of solidity or when our belief in the illusion momentarily breaks down. In these gaps within our everyday experience the ultimate ground of all being shines through and we are not
duped or caught up in the delusion of an independently existing self. As pointed out before, such moments are not necessarily sublime and mystical, but merely instants when we are not separated from experience by the self-conscious split between experiencer and experience. From this perspective, one can by-pass the rigid stair-stepping of phases and stages. We might say that if you could organize all the holes together you could create a kind of elevator shaft that could cut right through all the many floors on Wilber’s tall building of development. Having a shaft, however, one is still in need of an elevator to ride in and doors to give access to all the various levels. The literature of mystical spirituality gives examples of individuals who, by suffering extraordinary circumstances or through heroic courage and tenacity, realized that the path itself is an illusion and attained realization of the ultimate ground of all being on the spot, by the quick path of sudden, inner realization, while simultaneously treading the gradual outer path of progressing through the various stages.

The technique of mindfulness and awareness meditation is something like an elevator to ride in this shaft, or at least a way to explore the holes in the cheese. The contemplative practice of maitri space awareness is like elevator doors which link the different levels of consciousness with the central shaft. Wisdom seems to have something to do with an ability to explore the diverse qualities of different levels from a position of freedom and mobility rather than one of feeling trapped within a given level. These practices could be used by teachers to help them explore themselves and their subjective worlds.
The first four lines of "Auguries of Innocence" (see Allison et al., 1975, p. 555).


The literature concerning developmental stages is vast and varied. Beginning with Freud, the concepts and stages of psycho-sexual development leading to theories in ego development and object relations have gone through continual revisions, refinements and improvements up to the present day. Some of the contributors to this work include Klein (1932), Anna Freud (1946), Fromm (1941, 1967), Ferenczi (1956), Werner (1957a, b), Jacobson (1972), Mahler (1975), Lovinger (1976), and Blank and Blank (1979), to mention only a few. In addition to ego development and its related concerns, the recognition of many other lines of development has produced a plethora of works outlining developmental stages in fields as diverse as language acquisition and moral responsibility. One significant line has been the study of moral stages by Kohlberg (1964). Of these various other lines of development, the cognitive studies of Piaget have probably been the most influential. Because Piaget's meticulous observations of children revealed what he considered to be genetically determined structures in the acquisition of knowledge, his new discipline, termed 'genetic epistemology,' challenged the foundations of the all-nurture view that had dominated the social sciences in the first half of the century. Piaget's stages have been widely taught and applied as inherent and universal structures. This has recently been seen as a culturally biased over-generalization, and there has been a good deal of thoughtful criticism of Piaget and his developmental stages (Butterworth, 1982; Cohen, 1983; Egan, 1983; Feffer, 1988; Chandler & Chapman, 1991). Despite Piaget's rather narrow interest in the development of a certain kind of cognition, his theoretical formulations concerning how the process of development proceeds have had a profound influence on subsequent developmental theories. In particular, I find Piaget's concepts of emergent structures and equilibration (1964), as the process of establishing equilibrium or stable state in an open system, have become useful ways to frame an understanding of how the process of development unfolds. Though some of these developmental theorists have included stages that go beyond what is considered 'normal' development in our culture, development to the stage of 'normal' functioning as opposed to pathological or abnormal functioning has been the rule. Some theorists have ventured beyond the traditional developmental stages of childhood. Erikson's stages in the life cycle (1950), in particular, have presented an extended view into adulthood and old age. Jung's approach toward individuation, and Maslow's hierarchy of needs leading to self actualization and beyond (1968, 1971), both of which can be understood as theories of adult development, also began to push notions of 'development' to higher stages beyond what has been considered normal within our rational Western culture.

Many poets, artists, spiritually inclined people and shamans of traditional cultures have spoken of experiencing this kind of underlying rhythm in all things, which I merely remember glimpsing as a child. Consider these words of Black Elk (Black Elk & Lyon, 1990), a living Lakota shaman: "There are countless songs. Like the fire, it has a song. That fire shapes and forms all life, and each shape has a song. And the rocks, the rocks have songs. Like this rock I wear around my neck, it has a song. All the stones that are around here, each has a language of its own. Even the Earth has a song. We call it Mother Earth. We call her Grandmother and she has a song. Then the water, it has a song. The water makes beautiful sounds. The water carries the universal sounds. Now the green, This tree, every green has a song. They have a language of their own. There's a life there. You say there is a chemistry language there. So each green has a song. There's a lot of songs we don't know yet. One man could never get to know all of them" (p. 34).

The word 'clump' here is meant to conjure up an image like a 'heap,' which is the word generally cited as a literal translation of the Buddhist term skhandha, used to describe the development of ego consciousness in five phases, which from the Buddhist perspective have a direct relationship with the five elements. For a description of the five skhandhas, see Trungpa (1987).

After spending his youth immersed within the imaginatively expansive and intellectually stimulating world of modern art and literature, Gebser spent his later years in association with Europe's leading biologists, physicists, sociologists and psychotherapists, gradually formulating a developmental and ecological philosophy that integrated insights from all of these diverse disciplines. Chawla (1993) explains Gebser rejected outmoded schemes of individual and social progress and dedicated himself to defining new potentials for individual and global re-integration. Gebser articulated a qualitative, holistic phenomenology of experience, including human relations with the earth (p. 24). Acutely
aware of the link between the myopic quality of Western rationalism and an ever-increasing destabilization of forces in the world, Gebser, writing in the 1940s, states: 'The crisis of our times and our world is in a process – at the moment autonomously – of complete transformation, and appears headed toward an event which, in our view, can only be described as a "global catastrophe." This event understood in any but anthropocentric terms, will necessarily come about as a new constellation of planetary extent (Gebser, 1985, p. xxvii).


8 Rothberg (1986) points out some possible problems with any perennial model of transpersonal development. The most compelling of these seems to be the danger in reifying abstract concepts of 'higher levels' which then become a justification for devaluing the 'lower levels' of the earth, body and emotions and using the hierarchical model to justify oppression of individuals and groups ranked at a lower level. This is precisely how the hierarchical model of Christian spirituality has been abused in the West. Matthew Fox (1979) has suggested that 'Jacobs ladder' the hierarchical model of Christian spirituality, which separates clergy from lay people and which tends to cause a separation between justice and compassion when the higher-ups judge and control the lower-downs, should be replaced. Instead of climbing 'Jacobs ladder' he advocates dancing 'Sarah's circle' which was her celebratory rite at the birth of Isaac. This idea of replacing the masculine hierarchical structure with the feminine circle seems justified, given all of the oppression that has come more or less as a result of male hierarchical systems, yet it seems a bit naive to think that we could just do away with hierarchy altogether. Trungpa (1988), in speaking of 'natural hierarchy' as a basic principle of establishing order says: 'you do not put your slippers under your pillow, and you do not use your hair brush to polish your shoes' (p. 137).

9 For a Tibetan Buddhist understanding of how our perception is influenced and organized by the elemental principles, see Kalu (1986). Sogyal (1992, p. 248), in speaking of the process of dying as a gradual dissolving of the elemental principles, quotes Kalu (1986, p. 59): 'In short, it is from mind, which embodies the five elemental qualities, that the physical body develops. The physical body itself is imbued with these qualities, and it is because of this mind/body complex that we perceive the outside world – which in turn is composed of the five elemental qualities of earth, water, fire, wind and space.'

10 For an incisive critique of the ecological madness of modern culture, the scientific paradigm and small-minded economic thinking that lacks any vision of the future, as well as a viable alternative approach to sustain life on earth, see Goldsmith (1992) who has endeavoured to develop an ecological epistemology.

11 In the rationalism of the Greeks and Romans there seems to have been a gradual but progressive tendency to split apart matter from spirit, and earthly matters from the affairs of gods and goddesses (Berman, 1981). In Homeric times the intercourse between gods and humans, between heaven and earth, was taken for granted. The Presocratic philosophers, it seems, were a natural outgrowth of this spiritually enlivened universe. When Parmenides of Elea (see Barnes, 1979) posited that a single essential principle underlies everything, this seems to me to have been a non-theistic way to maintain a holistically inspired integration between a unitive cosmic principle and a gradually developing rational approach to matter and physics. Materialism – the tendency to believe that matter is all there is – might be seen to have been born in the West with Democritus and his invention of the atom. He explained that the soul itself was also probably made up of atoms, except that they were smaller atoms than the ones that make up everything else. Aristotle, who is given credit as the first to articulate a clear concept of matter, was critical of Parmenides and the others who had followed his notion, including Plato. Aristotle further split the realm of the gods from that of earthly matter. Epicurus suggested that even the gods were made of atoms, and the Roman poet Lucretius, perhaps reflecting what were progressive attitudes of his time, suggested that gods and religion might merely be ideas designed to serve political ends and not, in fact, part of the natural world at all. Later, during the Renaissance, the Church could see that the new religion of Galileo might be more convincing than theirs, so they maintained care in their metaphysical descriptions to draw a distinct line between those measurable matters of Galileo's world and those of God's immeasurable world (see Singer, 1921; de Santillana, 1955; Drake, 1957). Descartes, a deeply spiritual man, further proclaimed his important division (see Pomer, 1981; Capra, 1982; Hayward, 1987).

12 Roszak (1975), writing about the history of the idea of the evolution of consciousness, explains that what he calls 'the hidden wisdom' (teachings of Gnosticism, Kabbalism, Hermeticism, Neoplatonism)
'endorses the nearly unanimous view of world mythology that the human has descended from the super human, from the godlike and unblemished, by way of some primordial "fall." It regards the coming together on earth of spirit and matter as a risky venture, a destined but difficult marriage which gives us the opportunity to reclaim paradise from the mortality of physical nature, but which has also cost us the memory of our original nature" (p. 107). He quotes the Kabbalist master Isaac Luria: "there is no sphere of existence including organic and inorganic nature, that is not full of holy sparks which are mixed up with the Kelipoth (the elements of the unredeemed physical universe) and need to be separated from them and lifted up" (p. 110). The western metaphysical tradition which sees spirit as primary and matter as secondary (still maintaining a division between the two) is perhaps best summed up in the Secret Doctrines of Madame Blavatsky, the 19th century founder of the Theosophical Society. As she explains, 'Our physical planet is but the handmaiden of the spirit, its master' (quoted in Roszak, 1975, p. 120; also see Blavatsky, 1979).

Harrison (1985) examines the various ways that we shape our relative conception of a universe and then live within the confines of that conception. Jantsch (1980) gives us a 'self organizing universe'; Bohm (1980); Wilber (1982); and Talbot (1991), a unified 'holomovement' universe. Like the characters in fairy tales who have their wishes granted and then end up regretting what they wished for, perhaps we need to be wary of wishing for a universe which we might later regret. That goes equally for a holomovement universe as for a clockwork universe. If we can transcend the need to define the mystery, yet still attempt to embrace it and penetrate it in the way we live our daily lives, we may not leave such a legacy of confusion for our children as our ancestors have left for us.

The work of Piaget, though still taught widely in schools of education, has come under a certain amount of criticism, particularly, from my point of view, because his interest seems to have been concentrated primarily with the development of rational cognition and the scientific mode of reasoning. See Chandler and Chapman (1991) for several articles dealing with the controversies around how we tend to conceptualize and assess children's abilities. Butterworth (1982) and Cohen (1983) also critique and re-evaluate Piaget's theories from a broader perspective of what we might include within our definitions of intelligence and cognition. Egan (1983) argues that the psychological theories of Piaget and others are actually irrelevant to education, saying that a 'considerable amount of supposedly empirical research in education is in fact pseudo-empirical; it is doing epistemology the hard way. It merely articulates in confused terms what are analytic truths' (p.175). He advocates that we look at the educational theories of Plato since they address educational concerns directly, while he claims that present-day psychological theories describe 'the symptoms of forces which educational prescriptions may legitimately seek to shape' (p.176). His main point is that psychological theories, in his opinion, do not ultimately describe constraints on our nature and therefore have no implications for education.

Feffer (1988) critiques Piaget's concept, claiming it is only a variant of the 'Cartesian solution of giving to the organism the very attributes that the theory of development is directed toward explaining' (p. 161). To contrast the Piagetian view, Feffer proposes what he calls a 'radical constructionist' theory of development which proposes 'that the subject actively forms the object of knowledge in terms of a priori categories of knowing' (p. 1). Feffer speaks of various schemes and replaces Piaget's term 'cognitive functioning' with his own 'scheme activity.' His formulation attempts to account for the generation of conflict (disequilibrium) in terms of the consolative activities of an already given scheme and for the resolution of such a conflict in terms of a qualitatively new, more hierarchically organized form of scheme activity' (p. 161). "To simplify this whole issue, the ultimate question seems to be: How is it that we can make a leap from seeing and doing things in one way to seeing and doing things in a whole new way? It seems to me that on some fundamental level this will always be a mystery to the theorists and everyone else, and well it should be, otherwise it might never happen.

Piaget (1964) p. xxii (glossary). In terms that are more in keeping with the language of General Systems Theory (Von Bertalanffy, 1968), Sinnott (1989, p. 54) explains, "adjustments resulting from feedback can be compensatory, mechanistic responses of adjustment, that is, first-order changes that maintain equilibrium. Or, adjustments resulting from feedback can lead to transformation, to actualization that is adaptive, and to second order change. Equilibrium is a balance between or among system parts. Given a state of disequilibrium there will be an energy flow from one part to another." I have observed these principles demonstrated in a rather dramatic way in my therapeutic work with clients suffering from 'multiple personality disorder' when a new personality, more adaptive to the present set of life challenges, pops up seemingly right out of the conflict and chaos being experienced and expressed by the other personalities of their system.
The Great Chain of Being ‘...has, in one form or another, been the dominant philosophy of the larger part of civilized mankind through the most of history,’ says Arthur Lovejoy in his book of that title (1936, p. 26). He explains that many of the world’s great philosophers and religious teachers (‘the great number of subtler speculative minds’) came to more or less the same conclusions and that ‘The result was the conception of the plan and structure of the world which, through the Middle Ages and down to the late eighteenth century ... most educated men were to accept without question – the conception of the universe as a “great Chain of Being,” composed of an immense, or ... infinite, number of links ranging in hierarchical order from the meagrest kind of existent ... through “every possible” grade up to the ens perfectionism’ (p. 59, quoted in Smith, 1976, pp. 4-5). Although Lovejoy himself, writing as Smith, says in the ‘heyday of scientism’ argues that this view is mistaken, Wilber (1980, 1981b) as well as Smith (1976) resurrect it convincingly.


A term made famous as the title of Aldous Huxley’s book (1944), but originally coined by Leibniz as the Philosophia Perennias.

Wilber, Engler and Brown (1986), chapter 8 by Brown ‘The Stages of Meditation in Cross-cultural Perspective’ and chapter 9 by Chirban, ‘Developmental Stages in Eastern Orthodox Christianity.’

Eliot (1943), Four Quartets, Little Gidding, lines 239-242.

Beginning with Freud, the psychoanalytic school has consistently misinterpreted genuine spiritual experiences to be regressions to amorphous states of primitive and un-differentiated libido. That is to say, psychoanalysis has confused highly developed awareness and experience from the inward arc with relatively undeveloped phases from the outward arc. On the other hand, over-zealous spiritual and mystical aspirants equally tend to regard serious states of regression, borderline pathology and even psychosis in themselves and others as states of mystical unity and visionary rapture. Wilber refers to this confusion in psychological thinking as the ‘pre/trans fallacy’ meaning that trans-rational structures are mistaken for pre-rational structures simply because both are non-rational (see ‘The Pre/trans Fallacy’ in Wilber, 1983).

Feffer (1988) goes into detail explaining the process of development as part of his ‘radical constructionist’ theories. He speaks of a ‘scheme activity’ (a construct, says Feffer, synonymous with ‘cognitive functioning’) as ‘undergoing a four-stage process of development: an initial stage of consolidative integration, and successive stages of consolidative differentiation, conflict, and emergent reorganization’ (p. 2). It seems to me that to get from conflict to reorganization there needs to be something like a death, a letting go, a dissolving of forms, a stage of relative chaos that allows more energy to enter the system.


The Four Noble Truths are the first teachings uttered by the historical Buddha when, after his enlightenment, he had decided to teach despite the fact that he considered it impossible to express his realization. They are the truths of (1) suffering or anxiety, (2) the cause of suffering, dualistic consciousness or the tendency to cling to our belief in an independently existing self as separate from the rest of reality, (3) the cessation of suffering, and (4) the path to follow in order to accomplish the cessation of suffering.

For some examples of ‘sudden realization’ from the chronicles of Buddhist history, see Dowman and Beer (1988) which is an edited translation of a Tibetan text of the 12th century that recounts the legends of the eighty-four Mahasiddhas of Indian Tantric Buddhism. Beautifully illustrated, this book gives short biographies of the most prominent Indian masters who were ‘Extraordinary men and women who attained enlightenment and magical powers by disregarding convention and penetrating the core of life, the Mahasiddhas show us a way through human pain and suffering into a spontaneous and free state of oneness with the divine.’ The lives of the Christian saints also give examples of both sudden and gradual paths to union with the ‘ultimate Godhead.’ See Baring-Gould (1872-1882) 12 volumes, or Butler (1926-38), also 12 volumes.

Though an elevator may not be a traditional Buddhist simile, the idea that meditation and other aspects of Buddhist practice form a ‘vehicle’ (Sanskrit yana, and Tibetan theg-pa) which helps to carry the practitioner along on the journey towards enlightenment is a traditional metaphor.
Chapter 8
Wilber's Stages

- Undifferentiated prima materia
- Events with no space and no time
- Duality is born
- A serpent swallowing its own tail
- Magical omnipotence
- Primordial fear of being swallowed
- Hatching
- Primitive prana
- Klein's 'good breast, bad breast'
- Making an image of Mom
- With imagination: mind and body start to separate
- Magic
- Desire to repossess an image forms 'perception' like a dream
- Joining others in the trance of the talking mind
- A syntax of perception
- Magical language
- Abstract signs separate and operate on images
- Linear time and tense bring tension
- Erikson's 'autonomy vs. doubt and shame'
- In comparing and scheming, thoughts are born
- Gathering concepts we make a self
- Scripts and story lines
- Intoxicated by intellectual power
- A human mind and a horse's body
- Authenticity
- Vision logic
- Mandalas and wholeness
- Child-like fresh perception
- Only the now is real
- Helping teachers to find their elemental wisdom within

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In order to flesh out our understanding of the link between a teacher's elemental wisdom and a child's developmental journey, let us now take a trip through the stages of development as Wilber conceives them. Furthermore, we will attempt to link Western notions of development to the Buddhist teachings, which say that consciousness takes birth, develops and then passes away in each instant.

Wilber uses somewhat unconventional and idiosyncratic terms in The Atman Project as headings for his earliest levels. These are borrowed from Neumann (1973), a Jungian-based writer. In subsequent writings, Wilber has adopted simpler headings. However, since I have found that The Atman Project gives Wilber's most detailed description of these stages to date, I will make the effort to use and explain these terms.

Wilber (1980) calls the first stage rising out of the basic non-dual ground the Pleromatic Self. Pleromatic, he says, ‘is an old Gnostic term meaning the material
universe, the materia prima and virgo matter’ (p. 20). This term emphasizes the sense that
the self and the material cosmos are undifferentiated at this level. Thus, for the fetus in the
womb and in the earliest stage of infancy, all researchers seem to agree that there is no
separation between inside and outside, subject and object, body and environment. For the
newborn, self and universe are undivided. As Piaget explains it: ‘During the early stages
the world and the self are one; neither term is distinguished from the other ... the self is
material so to speak.’ Piaget calls this stage the ‘protoplasmic’ and also refers to it as
‘symbiotic consciousness.’

For Mahler, Pine and Bergman (1975), this is the autistic phase of primitive undif-
ferentiated ego and purely somatic defense mechanisms within a ‘primal undifferentiated
matrix.’ Loewinger says, ‘The baby at birth cannot be said to have an ego. His first task is
to learn to differentiate himself from his surroundings.’ Since there is no separation
between self and environment at this phase, there is also no space and no time, since there
is no gap, no distance, and no succession of objects in space. Therefore, this stage is pre-
spatial and pre-temporal. As Wilber says, ‘the neonate’s awareness is spaceless, timeless
and objectless, but not event-less,’ as events still occur within this undifferentiated
experience.

Wilber alludes to the fact that this phase is often thought of as a kind of primal
paradise or Garden of Eden occurring before the fall into self-consciousness. However,
he makes it clear that this is a pre-personal paradise of innocence and ignorance rather than
a trans-personal one of transcendence and omniscience.

The transformative task for the infant is to begin to separate out from the
undifferentiated mass an objective world and a subjective self. In the next stage this is only
partially achieved. To describe this next stage Wilber again borrows a term from Neumann:
the Uroboric Self.

Uroboros is the mythic serpent which eats its own tail, and signifies a self-
contained being (autistic) unable to recognize other (narcissistic), a pre-differentiated mass,
in the round and ignorant unto itself. Because this stage corresponds with the early oral phase as identified by Freud's psycho-sexual stages, Wilber adopts Neumann's term 'Alimentary Uroboros' to emphasize that the infant's connection to any vague sense of 'uroboric other' is an oral connection. The image evokes a sense of swallowing the self that at the same time begins to have a faint sense of not-self, or uroboric other. This stage is dominated by 'visceral psychology,' unconscious nature, physiology, instincts, reptilian perception, and the most rudimentary emotional discharges. Neumann refers to this uroboros as an 'ego germ... just beginning to be' and explains that it has an existence of its own that is not yet detached from the pleromatic mass, but only just beginning to differentiate itself from it.

Sullivan (1953) has called this the 'prototaxic mode,' when 'the infant's awareness consists of only momentary states, with no distinctions of time and place.' For Mahler, Pine and Bergman (1975), this would be the symbiotic phase of fusion with the mother. In Piaget's terms (1977), a child at this 'tail swallowing phase' is immersed only in the earliest or first three stages of the sensorimotor realm. From the psychoanalytic view, this is also the stage of 'magical hallucinatory omnipotence,' where the infant feels that just by wishing for something, it will appear.

Despite this quality of ignorant and pre-personal self satisfaction felt by the self swallowing uroboros, the vague beginning of a split between the uroboric self and the uroboric other also lays the roots of primordial fear. In characterizing this primal fear Wilber quotes the Upanishads: 'where ever there is other there is fear.' As the Freudians, the Jungians, and the Kleinians would all agree, this primal fear is particularly expressed at this phase as an oral fear, a fear of being swallowed, engulfed, annihilated by the uroboric other. Primordial fear is followed by a kind of primordial defensive, protective or assertive stance like the cry of an infant that asserts its right to exist and asserts power over its care takers to respond.
In the teachings of the Buddha known as the *Abhidharma* there is a five-stage process having to do with the continuously repeating, reconstruction of ego consciousness in the mature adult. Meshing the Eastern and Western modes as Wilber has done, we might regard these teachings known as the five *skhandhas* (literally the five "heaps") as a kind of recapitulation of the developmental process investigated by Western psychology. Through the heightened awareness of insight meditation practice, the five *skhandhas*, are observed as stages in a micro-process recurring in every instant. They are not unlike the macro-process of stages investigated within child development, as both lead up to full-blown ego consciousness. However, the Buddhist conceptualization of this process repeating itself as the rebirth of ego in each instant implies the possibility of going beyond the limitations inherent in this process by becoming aware of it.

The first *skhandha*, known as form, has to do with the original split of duality and corresponds more or less to this first step in a child's primitive differentiation of a subjective sense from the previously undifferentiated 'pleromatic' experience. The emotional qualities mentioned here, such as the primordial fear of annihilation and the consequent defensively aggressive stance, is associated with the water element, and in the higher stages of trans-ego development this *skhandha* of form is seen through, transforming that emotional energy into the non-dual wisdom of the water element, a cooling and pacifying style of sharp intelligence.

The next stage, or set of sub-stages, involves the emergence of an individual organism dominated by an organic or body-ego self. Since this stage represents a transition between the serpent Uroboros and the beginnings of a truly human mental ego, Wilber refers to it as the 'typhon': the mythological beast that is half human and half serpent. This stage of the typhon Wilber divides into three aspects or sub-stages: axial-body, pranic-body, and image body.

The term axial-image generally refers to the axis separating a perceiving subject from the perceived object, and Wilber's term axial-body refers to the infant's first
stabilization of a physical body felt as distinct from the physical environment. This is, then, a world of objects perceived in a simple, immediate and rather vague present with no sense of object constancy, corresponding with Mahler's hatching subphase (Mahler, Pine & Bergman, 1975) in which the infant's sensorophysical body-self hatches, and then moves into the ensuing practicing subphase, the height of narcissism, where the newly emerged objective world is absorbed into the rapidly expanding autonomous ego.

By pranic-body, Wilber refers to the affective development of this phase. Borrowing the term prana from Hindu and Buddhist yoga, Wilber is emphasizing the simple and purely energetic quality of the emotions at this level. As Werner (1957 b) and Arieti (1967) point out, the cognitive constructs at this level (the axial-images) are so primitive that they cannot sustain complex emotions.

The insight that emotions, in general, are made up of two components, a purely energetic component and a cognitive component, is significant. These two components both go through radical changes throughout the various stages of development. The transformation of emotions, therefore, is dependent on the dynamic interplay of these two components. The transmutation of primitive and childish emotions into elemental wisdom is possible because the raw energy of emotions is transformed both by a shift in the bodily experience of the energy as well as by a shift in the cognitive understanding of how that energy functions within the higher stages of trans-personal and trans-ego development.

A primary example of the interplay between affective energy and a cognitive construct at this phase, in the theories of Klein (1932), is the 'projective identification' of the mother's breasts into the 'good breast' and 'bad breast.' This cognitive construct is a very primitive dualistic one that lays a foundation for dualistic value judgements altogether, the origin of good and bad, positive and negative, pleasure and pain, etc. This construct then directs the energy. The driving energy connected with the need and desire for nourishment, closeness and security associated with mother is split off from the feelings of fear, abandonment, aggression and dissatisfaction. A fixation at this level of development will
manifest as 'splitting' which is psychiatric jargon to refer to a patient's tendency to project all of their negative emotions on one object and all of their positive emotions on another.

In the Buddhist skhandhas, or what we have termed a kind of micro-recapitulation of ego development in the adult, these same emotional qualities are gathered into a 'heap' known as the second skhandha of 'feeling.' In the skhandha of 'feeling' the vague subjective sense responds to any possible object with a simple primitive response of attraction, repulsion or indifference asserting the power to make a primitive value judgement, which then directs energy into action. The rather primitive and compulsive emotional energy of this skhandha is associated with the earth element, and has to do with a felt need for nurturance and a fear of hunger. The transmutation of these raw emotions into the non-dual wisdom of the earth element brings what is known as the wisdom of equanimity.

Since at this stage there is a further development of a separate self sense, there is a more well-defined fear of extinction. Thus, a sense of immediate survival governs the motivational realm. From the affective perspective, or pranic-body, a primitive preoccupation with seeking pleasure and avoiding pain asserts itself. This is a pleasure principle purely of the body where sexuality is undifferentiated throughout the body such that the psychoanalytic tradition refers to the bodily pleasure at this level as 'polymorphously perverse.' Nonetheless, in an overall sense this phase is still within the oral phase of Freud's psychosexual development.

The significant shift within the typhon stage is the child's increasing ability to create extensive imagery. This development leads to a gradual construction of an extended world of objects, an expanded mode of time, and eventually to 'object constancy.' Wilber calls the new environment and new self that emerge the image-body. The gradually increasing ability to construct imagery at this phase leads to the eventual completion of Piaget's sensorimotor realms.

The primary image at this stage is, of course, a reflection of the primary object, what Sullivan (1953) calls the 'mothering one.' Whereas at the previous, less-differentiated
level Klein saw a split between the good breast and bad breast, Sullivan sees a similar split now encompassing the newly identified mother into 'good mother' and 'bad mother.' The struggle of this phase, as Wilber explains, is played out on a 'bodily plane' between the newly emerged individual organism and its mothering environ. This involves Erik Erikson's (1950) earliest stage of basic trust vs. basic mistrust. This is also the phase dominated by what Jungians call the 'realm of maternal symbolism' and for Freudians the stages of the pre-Oedipal mother.

While developing an increasingly differentiated sense of other, a sense of self is simultaneously created. Sullivan refers to these early roots of ego structure as the 'good me,' the 'bad me,' and the 'not me.' These, as Wilber says, are usually correlative with the Good Mother, Bad Mother and Devouring Mother.

From a cognitive standpoint, it is important to remember that this stage leads up to object constancy proper and involves its stabilization. It is helpful to think in terms of Piaget's concept of the dynamic process of equilibration as responsible for bringing development along to this turning point and continuing on from it. The image at this stage is in the process of maturing from what Wilber distinguishes as an 'axial-image' (only able to picture present objects) and an image proper that can picture non-present objects. For Mahler, Pine and Bergman (1975) this is the all important phase of 'rapprochement,' where the child's experiments in physical independence and obsession with peek-a-boo lead to what they call 'the psychological birth of the human infant.'

The development of imagery culminating with object constancy marks, more or less, a completed division between subject and object, while also beginning the process of dividing mind from body. For if the mind can picture an object that is not physically present, that is, a transcendence of the bodily senses bounded by physical limitations, then mind begins to explore the possibility of a realm of imagination beyond the body. Nonetheless, as Wilber emphasizes, this phase is still dominated by the body, and the ability of the mind to reach beyond body is only rudimentary at best. I wish to point out
here that object constancy is a kind of tiny seed of the potential split between mind and body that will sprout and mature in the next phase with the emergence of language.

With the development of imagery, an expanded sense of time is also possible. As Wilber (1980) says, summarizing the perspectives of Arieti (1967) and Sullivan (1953):

'The infant begins to enter the world of an extended, but as yet random series of moments. He moves in an extended present through which float the unorganized images of past events and random images of future possibilities' (p. 17). Sullivan calls this the ‘parataxic mode,’ where the previously undifferentiated wholeness of experience is broken down into parts but not yet connected or organized with any form of logical sequencing.

Wilber claims Sullivan’s parataxic mode is roughly equivalent to Freud’s ‘primary process,’ where not only is there a lack of logical sequencing, but also there is a peculiar confusion of logical typing or organization of similar objects. Thus, for the primary process, if objects share a predicate such as hollowness or openness, as do a cup, a cave, a box and a womb, then all these are regarded as identical or not having separate identities.

This ‘magical thinking,’ unable to discriminate a member of a class from the class itself, also confuses subject and object, blurring the boundary that has been so tenuously established. At times, magical thinking even confuses subject for object, like looking in a mirror and not knowing which is which or who is who. This mix-up can cause further confusion due to losing the ground of a primary reference point. Magical thinking of the primary process, as Wilber says, ‘can be an endless source of trouble.’ He makes an important distinction between this magical thinking, or lower fantasy of the primary process, and a higher fantasy of later stages which he calls ‘vision image’ or ‘vision-logic.’

As the imagination develops, so does the potential for an extended sense of emotions and motivations. The image can evoke emotional states similar to those evoked in the presence of the actual object. Therefore, when the image can replace the missing object (object constancy), emotions and motivations are extended in time. Motivation at this stage,
therefore, can involve anxiety reduction and wish fulfillment. For as Wilber points out, anxiety is imagined and sustained fear, while wishes are simply imagined pleasure.

The Buddhist skhandha that seems to correspond to this stage of child development is known as 'perception,' having to do with the mind’s ability to project a primitive gestalt or image into the overwhelming confusion of sensory experience. The energy behind this projection is the emotional energy of desire and wish fulfillment based on craving to repossess that image which has been projected out to become an object of desire. As the cognition which shapes and directs the desire becomes more and more refined, so does the desire. It is as if the two feed each other in the fantasy and hallucinatory dream-like process of imagination and wish fulfillment. This combustible quality of emotion and image cognition in this skhandha is associated with the element of fire. The non-dual wisdom of the fire element is referred to as ‘discriminating awareness wisdom,’ referring to the highly refined quality of perception that results when self referential desire wears down.

The culmination of the sensorimotor stage is summed up in the stabilization of object constancy. With this development, the body ego has fully differentiated itself from the material environment, stepping out of the primitive state of being embedded in it. Formerly bound up in a fusion with the material environment, now the active toddler can perform physical operations on that environment. Wilber emphasizes the significance of this evolutionary process and points out its three-part structure: ‘by differentiating the self from an object, the self transcends that object and thus can operate upon it.’

The emergence and acquisition of language marks the transition from a body-ego to what Wilber refers to as the ‘verbal-membership self.’ Just as the body-ego gradually separated itself from the material environment in the last stage, here the mind is beginning to separate out and differentiate itself from the body to create the verbal mind, which transcends the typhonic body with its impulsive reactivity in a world of the simple present.

‘Membership self’ refers to the way a child is indoctrinated into perceiving the world as it is experienced and described by the culture to which he or she is a member.
Charles Tart (1987) has made a thorough study of this phase transformation. Tart compares this period of indoctrination with the process of inducing hypnosis. He finds that the process whereby adults gradually and unknowingly convince children to believe in the same reality they believe in, with relentless pressure day in and day out, for years, is identical to the procedure of putting someone in an hypnotic trance (except that this process is a thousand times more powerful because of the consistency and duration).

Tart (1987) refers to the particularly limited consciousness that results from this long-term and intensive hypnosis as the 'consensus trance' or 'the sleep of everyday life' (pp. 62-106). This indoctrination into a way of perceiving begins before the gradual emergence of language, but it is accelerated and completed through the medium of language, as well as through the cognitive structures language helps to shape. As Wilber explains, the deep structure of any language has a syntax of perception, and anyone learning that language simultaneously learns to construct and perceive the specific descriptive reality of that language. At this stage, the structure of language will, as the philosopher Wittgenstein has pointed out, define the limits of the world.

As language emerges, it catalyses a surge of transformation within all the various 'lines' of development. There is a higher cognitive style, a further extension of linear time, a more unified sense of self, more complex emotions, and early forms of reflexive self control.

Cognition here goes through an intermediary phase. In Piaget's (1977) terms, the 'precausal phase' precedes 'realistic thinking.' Freud (1955b) similarly recognized a prelogical phase as intermediate between the primary process and the secondary process. Sullivan (1953) describes early language as autistic language that eventually gives way to what he calls the syntactical mode. Arieti (1967) speaks of paleological thinking that matures into Aristotelian thinking. Lacan (1968) calls this intermediary phase, still immersed in the primary process yet possessing language, the 'forgotten language of childhood.' Wilber makes the distinction between the 'magical thinking' of this phase and
'magic images' of the previous phase. Furthermore, Wilber refers to this stage in cognitive development as the 'mythic membership stage.' He also borrows Arieti's term 'paleological thinking,' seeing it as operating within the context of a 'mythical' world. Wilber (1980) describes the difference between the previous cognitive phase and this one, in this way:

Like the magical primary process, this paleological thinking frequently operates on the basis of whole/part equivalency and predicate-identity; but unlike the pure primary process, which is strictly composed of non-verbal images, precausal thinking is largely verbal and auditory—it is constructed through linear word-and-name, with abstract and auditory symbols. Unlike the image of the primary process, it is a true type of thinking-proper, operating with proto-concepts verbal abstraction, and elementary class formation. We might say it is a language informed by the magical primary process. (p. 23)

This cognitive development which uses rudimentary abstractions, or words, as opposed to pure images of the previous level, marks another distinct transformation in the separation of the mind from the body. Just as the images of object constancy allowed for a differentiation of self from the material world, so the abstract signs of language allow a differentiation of mind from the image, which is bound to the senses and therefore still bound to the body. This is the birth of abstract thought or symbol manipulation divorced from sensory experience. As Hall (1972) says, 'Language is the means of dealing with the non-present world,' and Wilber adds 'infinitely beyond that of simple images.'

During this phase, the sense of time becomes structured with a past and a future. For as the abstraction of language increases, the ability to conceive of non-present things and events is also greatly enhanced. The ability to conceive of events in sequence is most certainly related to the medium of language as a sequence of words. Part of becoming a member in a human culture has to do with sharing a common concept of time, and out of that, a common experience of time. The further structuring of time, at this stage, also leads to a further structuring of emotions in time. 'Specific temporal desires, as well as concrete temporal dislikes, can for the first time be entertained and articulated' (Wilber, 1980,
Likewise, with language, a sense of choice and possibilities can be entertained and expressed, allowing for the development of the roots of will power and autonomous choice.

This increased ability to construct a sense of time while greatly expanding conceptual abilities and putting one in synchronization with the membership culture also exacts a toll. For as Wilber says, there is a price to be paid for every increase in consciousness. In this case, a sense of time deeply affects the sense of self in relation to the world. Wilber calls this the 'tensed-self sense' and explains that with the verb tenses in language comes a 'tensed world, and thus a world of tension, time and anxiety being synonymous (as Kierkegaard knew).' This existential perspective is particularly applicable beginning at this stage, for an increased awareness of sequential time brings with it an increased awareness of mortality as well as an increase in feelings of isolation and vulnerability.

An increased sense of time also affects impulse control. As the psychoanalyst Fenichel (1945) explains, self-control is dependent upon the 'gradual substituting of actions for mere discharge reactions. This is achieved through the interposing of a time period between stimulus and response.'

From the perspective of Freud's psychosexual stages, this issue of self-control is played out in the struggle over toilet training as a manifestation of issues embedded in the anal phase. According to Erikson (1950), 'active mastery' and 'self control' depend as much upon a sense of tense and time as they do upon increasing mastery over the body's musculature. Erikson feels that this issue of self-control is central to this phase characterizing the struggle as one of 'autonomy vs. doubt and shame.'

The Buddhist skhandha that might correspond with this phase is the fourth skhandha, translated variously as 'concept,' 'cognition' or 'formation' and having to do with mental events. Buddhist scriptures actually categorize these mental events and number the categories as fifty-one or fifty-two, depending on the particular school. Although all the emotional energies come and go within this phase, clothed in the cognitive fabric of
mental contents which pop into mind and then fade away, the overall emotional tone of this skhandha of mental events has to do with envy, or a kind of compulsive tendency to make comparisons between self and other. This emotional energy has to do with the struggle and scheming involved in carving out a self-concept from the social and competitive landscape of others, and it is the emotional energy immediately responsible for the thoughts we think.

This energy that gives rise to mental contents has long been associated in both the Buddhist and Hindu traditions with the element of air, or more especially wind, as its quality of movement is its most significant characteristic, perpetuating what has been termed 'the stream of consciousness' in the West. Invisible and evanescent like the wind, it nonetheless has great power, like that of storms or prevailing winds, to shape the lives of people and events in the world. When this wind energy is transmuted into a non-dual wisdom as part of the maturing process of spiritual development within the transpersonal phases, it is known in the Buddhist system as the wisdom of all-accomplishing action.

As the development of language and the indoctrination of the membership phase proceeds, the child's sense of self gradually changes from one identified with the typhonic-body to one identified with the verbal-mental realm. During this transition, as we have seen above, the primary process slowly loses its hold over thinking, and secondary process emerges as a person enters what Wilber calls the mental-egoic realms. In incremental steps, conscious awareness is dominated more and more by our present-day conventional ways of thinking, which happen to be linear, conceptual, abstract, and verbal in our Western culture. As these ways of thinking stabilize, the early ego is born. Ego proper is dependent on concepts for its tenuous existence. Wilber tells us ego cannot exist without concepts.

Whereas the self sense of the previous levels lie within an arc of the first third of Wilber's complete life cycle which he calls the pre-personal (see figure 9) the advent of the self-concept-ego lies within the realm of personal self-consciousness. The sense of self at this level is beyond being an amorphous self-image or a mere label, word or name. It has
become a higher-order unity or constellation of syntactically organized self-concepts. As Arieti (1967) says:

Man at the conceptual level no longer sees himself as a physical entity or as a name, but as a repository of concepts which refer to his own person ... in thinking feeling and even in acting, man becomes more concerned with concepts than things.

With the use of concepts, the parent-child relationship can be internalized or introjected, thus giving birth to what Freud and psychoanalysis identify as the 'super ego.' The suggestions, commands, injunctions and prohibitions of the parents can be fixed in the psyche as verbal-concepts. Wilber (1980) generalizes beyond this to say that at this stage previous 'inter-personal' relationships become 'intra-psychic' (p. 31). This creates what Perls (1969) and Berne (1974) refer to as 'internal dialogue,' where the various structures of the ego or self-concept can be identified as verbal concepts or 'scripts,' carrying on an intrapsychic drama. Thus at this level, all the other forms of awareness and experiences from other levels are gradually reintegrated and organized into the verbal-conceptual mode. Emotions, for example, are linked with the words that describe them. Furthermore, emotions are justified and enhanced by constructing lengthy self-confirming, verbally articulated story lines.

The various aspects of development at the conceptual-ego stage become exceedingly complex and varied. It is not necessary to go into great detail here in describing these. However, it is significant to review how this stage has been reached through a constructive process whereby, to put it simply, something has been built up from nothing. From an experience of non-dual helplessness and confusion, the newborn infant gradually separated out subject from object, giving birth to experience conditioned by duality. Next, a baby explores primitive emotions, gradually refining them by consolidating the gestalts of perception with the imaging process that leads to object constancy. Then the preschooler, with the tools of rudimentary language and primitive concepts, builds a 'database' called the self.
This self will serve as a reference point, such that everything experienced will come out of or go back into it. The fact that this self is made out of mental concepts separates the mind from the material body. Furthermore, since the self of this stage is one that identifies itself with concepts, the world it experiences is also a conceptual world. This has the effect of shutting off the direct experience of the senses in favour of quickly identifiable preconceptions. For example, the difference between fully seeing a tree, as when you set out to draw it in every detail, and just glancing at it in passing while thinking or saying to yourself 'tree' is the difference between living in a world of concepts and fully participating in an interactive process of perception and knowing. The self, at this stage, is to a large extent imprisoned in concepts.

Wilber divides the egoic realm into three major phases based primarily on Piaget's cognitive stages. Wilber's early ego (ages 4 to 7) is consolidated with the emergence of what Piaget calls 'concrete operational thinking'. This cognitive mode which transcends representational thinking to operate on the concrete world with higher-order concepts, dominates Wilber's middle ego (ages 7 to 12). Then, at early adolescence, with the emergence of Piaget's 'formal operational' stage, Wilber marks the beginning of his late ego/persona stage that will dominate up through a mature ego, which serves as the turning point away from ego altogether, and on toward the transpersonal journey, which constitutes Wilber's inward arc on the final third of the life cycle.

Piaget's formal operational stage is the first cognitive structure that goes beyond just thinking and allows for thinking about thinking. This kind of self-reflective awareness begins the long process that will eventually transcend concepts. The self at this level begins to lift to a higher order unity. It is as if the self were standing upon a high hill overlooking the various fields of different crops, and pastures with fences dividing them, as well as a broader vista of farmhouses, barns, roads and villages. The self of this level is no longer standing in one pasture looking over the fence at another. That is to say, in formal operations the self is no longer bound up by a strict adherence to a specific limited set of
concepts but can survey a variety of concepts, compare them, critique them, and pick and choose from them. This allows for pluralism, open-mindedness and a critical perspective. Multiculturalism, for example, or an interest in other cultures, can thrive, (as opposed to narrow-minded xenophobia, which can occur when this stage has not been fully developed). Piaget's concerns, however, are more with the development of formal logic and propositional reasoning. The relationship between concepts at this level begins to become more important than the isolated concepts themselves.

This is the level at which the split between mind and body, intellect and intuition can begin to become solidified and rigidly maintained. The tendency to over-identify with the intellect to the exclusion of other ways of knowing begins when the power of this new cognitive ability more rigidly defines sense of self. The various levels of abstraction become more and more divorced from concrete experience. Mistaking the map for the territory leads to what we have seen Bateson (1972) refer to as 'pathologies of epistemology,' and to what Berman (1981) attributes as the progressive disenchantment of the world.

In terms of personality and affective development, Wilber follows the works of Perls and Berne, as well as including Jung's notion of the personae. Personality development at this phase mirrors, or is shaped by, the newly developed cognitive structures which allow for diversity and plurality. Briefly, Wilber postulates that the pluralistic personality of adolescence arises out of various aspects of the self that have been formed through introjected aspects of interpersonal relationships, during the first two cognitive phases of egohood. These introjected aspects come primarily from relationships with parents and siblings; teachers and peers form a significant secondary source. With the emergence of formal operations, the gradual (and sometimes never-ending) process of integrating these various personae into a mature ego proceeds.

Since these various personae are basically concepts, the same process as described above can occur in reference to these masks, habitual patterns or ways of being. That is to say, introspection can allow for self-awareness and a sense of space to step back from
various personae, to pick and choose what is appropriate and what is not. Differentiating from various personae leads toward a freedom of choice. Once again, dissatisfaction leads to disidentification with limited roles, and finally an integration of a mature and flexible ego structure comes into focus.

The advent of formal operations and the subsequent integration of a mature ego structure is obviously a significant step in freeing up awareness. Nonetheless, awareness at this level is still bound up with concepts and thus still imprisoned within the conceptual realm.

For Wilber, this phase in the formation and consolidation of ego corresponds with the fifth skhandha in the Buddhist teachings, which describe the recurring process of ego formation in each instant of mature adult life. Referring to this skhandha as ‘consciousness’ Trungpa (1987) tells us that it completes the fabrication process, filling in and smoothing over any of the gaps that were left unfinished in the four earlier phases of the ego-building process. Like patching up the cracks in a wall with plaster and finishing it off with a coat of paint, the fifth skhandha gives the illusion that a multi-faceted process built of many parts now appear, as the one solid entity known as ‘my self.’ This seems to be primarily accomplished through a tendency to believe our thoughts. Believing our projections to be reality produces an overall dullness or sleepiness, like being in a trance. Actions tend to be automatic, based on habit, and we tend to take most things for granted. Characterized by a lack of curiosity and wonder, this emotional energy of indifference is associated with the element of space in the Tibetan tantric system. The non-dual wisdom that results from experiencing the raw emotional energy of the space element without falling into the trap of indifference is known as the wisdom of all-potentiality.

Wilber's next level, the last developmental stage within the personal realms, is named after the 'centaur,' the mythological being with the swift, agile body of a horse and the sophisticated, broad mind of a human. In the centaur, these two—body and mind—are synchronized perfectly together in a state of at-one-ment. This image refers to a stage of
development beyond a mature ego. Here all the lower levels are integrated into a smoothly operating holistic totality. Because consciousness is gradually disidentifying or no longer strictly identifying with the verbal-ego-mind, which tended to exclude other aspects of being such as the body and hidden aspects of the unconscious, all of these are now free to be brought together into a higher level unity.

By again using a term from mythology, Wilber is saying symbolically that this phase enters back into the magic of myth and that this is a super-human, a hero. Like the heroes in Campbell's (1949) work, the centaur is on a quest that will uncover whatever seems most frightening and repulsive within, only to find that it is not ultimately frightening or repulsive but actually the essence of the true spiritual life. This hero is beginning the descent into the underworld or the powerful realms of the unconscious which are so reminiscent of childhood, yet so different now, because the hero has already come a long way on the journey of becoming fully human. Having developed ego, rational thought and conceptual mind to their natural limit, now it is time to let go and go further, to begin to rediscover the power of the undifferentiated and non-dualistic state of mind. To be half horse and half human symbolizes that the hero has taken back all of the power of the animal, such as the emotional energies and instincts of the lower levels of development, and joined them to the human powers of intellect and conceptualization. Higher education should ideally emphasize integration at this level of development, rather than being fixated on training the intellect to higher and higher levels of abstraction. My proposal that university students training to be teachers need to learn to meditate and practice contemplative exercises to bring them to experience the raw energy of their emotions as elemental wisdoms is one way of guiding students into levels of awareness beyond intellect toward the more direct perception of intuition.

This realm on the edge of the spiritual and transpersonal has been thoroughly investigated by the Third Force in psychology; the Humanistic and Existential psychotherapies. The notion of 'self actualization,' first introduced by Goldstein (1939)
and Horney (1968) and further popularized by Maslow (1968, 1971), Rogers (1961) and Perls (1969), is a central theme at this higher level of integration. By re-uniting previously conflicting aspects of one's being and bringing all of it together to operate in harmony, one experiences an inner freedom from self-imposed limitations and is able to act in the world with 'autonomy' and 'authenticity.' Furthermore, those primitive urges of the id, which in the early phases were impulsively acted out for immediate discharge and later repressed in the unconscious by the superego, or perhaps sublimated into other activities, are now tolerated more and more on a conscious level. This liberated energy is then free to be expressed in action that is uninhibited and healthy, spontaneous and appropriate. Rogers (1961) refers to this reintegration or bringing together as a 'total, on-going psychophysiological flow' or 'total organismic experiencing,' while May (1969) describes this integration, into a sense of freedom, in this way:

Neither the ego nor the body nor the unconscious can be "autonomous," but can only exist as parts of a totality. And it is in this totality that will and freedom have their base.8

For their exploration and eloquent descriptions of this developmental phase, Wilber pays tribute to the existential philosophers and psychologists, including Kierkegaard (1954), Nietzsche (1956), Husserl (1931), Heidegger (1950), Sartre (1966), Binswanger (1963), Frankl (1963, 1967), Boss (1963), May (1969), Bugental (1965), and Maddi (1972). Wilber explains that: 'notions of authenticity, of concrete-being-in-the-world, of pure experiencing and true seeing, of Dasein, of intentionality, autonomy, meaning and the centered self' all describe the phase that he refers to as the centaur or 'existential centaur.' Though all of these thinkers are not in perfect agreement, they nonetheless share a substantial number of assumptions and common conclusions, which Wilber believes to be a result of their personal realization or intuition of this level of being and awareness.

Psychologists such as Bruner (1973), Flavell (1970) and Arieti (1967) have indicated that there is growing evidence of a cognitive structure beyond Piaget's formal
operational. This structure has been referred to as ‘dialectical,’ ‘integrative,’ and ‘creative synthetic.’ Wilber refers to it as ‘vision-logic’ or ‘trans-verbal vision-image’ and sees it as the cognitive mode of the fully integrated centaur. Just as each newly emergent cognitive structure thus far has reintegrated the previous cognitive modes and then operates upon them, so the emerging vision-logic can operate upon formal operations. Whereas formal operations deals with relationships between concepts, vision logic steps back a little further, taking in a wider scope to comprehend patterns or networks of relationships.

Vision-logic involves a highly developed form of cognition going beyond linear logic, language, and concepts to grasp larger interacting patterns of ideas in an intuitive, and we might say timeless or instantaneous, way. Vision-logic understands the interconnectedness of all things and therefore does not attempt to isolate causes and conditions within any kind of structural or linear framework. In this way, vision-logic, a type of holistic intuition, is similar to the Buddhist notion of prajna, described earlier as the wisdom which perceives the interconnectedness of all things and therefore the emptiness (shunyata or lack of substantial existence) of all things.

Vision-logic is a cognitive mode that according to Wilber emerges gradually in a natural evolutionary process, and will eventually, when it is fully stabilized, integrate all the lower cognitive structures in a powerful synthesis. Wilber sees vision-logic as the highest order cognitive integration of the personal realm. It is also the beginning of a higher-order synthesizing capacity that will continue to develop. The experience of vision-logic at the level of the centaur is just the tip of the iceberg of greater wisdom which develops in the transpersonal levels of spiritual development.

Jung’s psychology has probably been the most influential in proclaiming the transformative power of symbols, dreams and a visionary consciousness. For Jung, symbolic processing is a higher form of thinking, with the purpose of unifying and integrating various and often conflicting aspects of the psyche. In Jung’s own words:
The inner image, is a complex factor, compounded from the most varied material from the most varied of sources. It is no conglomerate however, but an integral product, with its own autonomous purpose. The image is a concentrated expression of the total psychic situation, not merely, nor even pre-eminently, of unconscious contents pure and simple.  

The inner image or symbol speaks in a way that language or linear thought cannot. It speaks of a timeless totality and expresses itself more through feeling, colour, tone or quality than through the linear logic of proofs or the duality of concepts such as true and false or good and bad. If we talk about intelligence on this level, we do not talk about it in a way which makes sense from a logical analysis that seeks concrete proof; rather, we talk about it in a way that is poetic, symbolic, and suggestive. The qualities that can be evoked through images, stories, drama and feelings cannot be proven right or wrong, good or bad; they just are. This is why the five qualities of elemental wisdom are associated with earth, water, fire, air and space. These elements evoke qualities and have symbolic meanings that go far beyond any literal interpretation.

Jung and his followers have made extensive use of the 'mandala' as a means to express and access the kind of cognition that Wilber refers to as vision-logic. Mandalas are complex circular figures used in higher meditation practices and have been an integral part of Eastern meditative traditions since the dawn of history. Jung borrowed the mandalic form from Tibetan Buddhism and successfully adapted, a simplified version into his psychological system. Jung used the mandala principle as a tool for helping individuals to unify and integrate diverse aspects of the self toward a goal of wholeness.

Mandalas, especially as they are conceived of and worked with in meditative traditions, are the most perfect expression of vision-logic, in that they unify within a single image an immense amount of information, representing an entire world of experience. In many cases, it takes volumes and volumes of text to merely approximate what is contained and condensed in the extensive interrelating symbols of one mandala. To read the texts and
commentaries is time consuming, while the mandala can be apprehended, with contemplative practice, all at once, in a kind of timeless instant. In the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, most mandalas are laid out with the five elemental wisdom qualities as a basic foundation.

Wilber goes to great lengths to distinguish this trans-verbal vision-image from the pre-verbal primary process. Though both of these use images and symbols as 'over-determined' or richly significant elements in a language of fantasy or dreamlike syntax, they are otherwise vastly different. Wilber speaks of lower and higher fantasy. Lower fantasy is connected with the primary process and is body-bound or embedded in the earliest forms of primitive consciousness and instinctual urges. This is the id-fantasy, or what we have seen earlier as typhonic cognition; and as psychoanalysis suggests, this type of fantasy occurring at later stages represents a regression to those more primitive modes and indicates some fixation there. This is quite distinct from Wilber's higher fantasy: the trans-verbal vision-image which points toward higher modes of understanding or cognition of trans-verbal realities.

Psychoanalysis does not acknowledge any higher form of fantasy and has therefore tended to reduce all such symbolic activity into the lowest form of body-bound primary process tied up with primitive instincts. For example, since the image of the breast enters consciousness long before the mandala, and since both are round, psychoanalysis believes that a mandala has no further significance than as a symbol of the breast. Wilber says this is equivalent to regarding a human being as a symbol of an amoeba since the amoeba came first.

Not only does the centaur forge new kinds of understanding that go beyond the expressive ability of language into trans-verbal expressions, but even at the more profound level of perception, the experience of the centaur slowly begins to transform. By embarking upon a process which will culminate in a liberation from language and the restrictive power of dualistic thought patterns, the mature centaur will move into perceptual experiences that are trans-consensus, trans-membership, trans-social. That is to say, perception at this stage
begins to detach itself from conceptualization and normal cognition so that the centaur is free to see things more as they are and less through the lens of cultural and personal conditioning.

As we remember, in the ‘verbal membership self,’ a self that identifies with language-cognition is immersed in a perceptual reality as described by the language and style of cognition of the culture to which he or she is a member. Now as a centaur, with a higher-order awareness, she is freed from the limitations of this particular description of reality into a more immediate and accurate perceptual reality not constrained by words and concepts. It is interesting to note in the works of artists like Cézanne, Picasso, Kandinsky, Klee and many others, the history of modern art can be seen as a chronicle of personal and communal, or cultural iconoclastic, shattering of perceptual conventions.

This perception, less encumbered by conceptual labels and stereotypic world views, is similar to that of a child in its freshness. In this case, however, it is not pre-verbal membership like that of the child but trans-verbal membership. Diekman says it in this way:

rather than speaking of a return to childhood, it is more accurate to say that the undoing of automatic perceptual and cognitive structures permits a gain in sensory intensity and richness at the expense of abstract categorization. It is occurring in an adult mind, and the experience gains its richness from adult memories and functions now subject to a different mode of consciousness.\textsuperscript{11}

Schachtel, whose work in the development of perception shows similar phases correlating with Wilber’s pre-membership, membership and trans-membership modes of perception, has this to say concerning the trans-membership phase:

It is in these experiences that transcend the cultural schemata … that every new insight and every new work of art has its origin, and that hope of progress, of a widening of the scope of human endeavor and human life is founded.\textsuperscript{12}
The humanistic and existential psychotherapists also agree with this. Rollo May speaks of perception free of ‘ego-conceptual translations’ and Roger’s ‘organismic experiencing’ also involves re-learning a direct and less conceptual perception.

The mode of time experienced by the centaur is best summed up in the phrase from Gestalt Therapy: ‘only the now is real.’ That is to say, the mature centaur is grounded in the immediate and vivid present, yet not confined to it, as is the infant-body-self. The individual at this level has complete access to the entire conventional world of extended time, able to consider the past and plan for the future. However, there is a certain liberation from the anxiety or ‘tense-ness’ of conventional time. The fully integrated body-mind centaur is less bound to the patterns of the past and less driven by goals of a projected future. By remaining fully aware of the present moment, an intuitive wisdom of past and future develops so that lessons of the past and also future possibilities are contained in the present, just as a seed contains the history of a plant’s development as well as its future life.

In summary, the existential centaur has progressed to the highest level of the personal or egoic realm. The development of ‘authenticity,’ spontaneous action, a higher-order cognitive mode, and perception less encumbered by concepts have been gained through a progressive process of disidentification with the mental-conceptual-ego, allowing for a reintegration and transformation of the more primitive structures which had been cut off and relegated to the unconscious. This transitional phase, marking the end of the egoic or personal realms and the beginning of the non-ego or transpersonal realms, is most relevant to training teachers. Wilber goes on to describe the many levels of awareness and stages of growth that develop along the rest of his inward arc of transpersonal and spiritual growth. Though descriptions of these ineffable modes of experience can evoke something of a glimpse of their latent potential which lies within us all the time, these levels go somewhat beyond the scope of our present discussion.

A teacher training program that could at least open the way for teachers to discover glimpses of Wilber’s centaur stage of development with its early forms of ‘vision-logic’
would introduce teachers to their own endless source of inner wisdom in order to help them in their task of encouraging young people in their own natural development. One way to foster an awareness of these uniquely individual potentials that begin to blossom at this level is through meditation practice and the contemplative practices as methods for uncovering elemental wisdom. Such contemplative techniques are only useful, however, if they are practiced in the context of a nurturing and caring as well as challenging contemplative and educational community. Outside of this context it is very easy for someone to lose perspective and use these practices to enhance their self image rather than to go beyond it.

Processing or working through personal emotions in a way similar to that accomplished in the process of psychotherapy has not, to my knowledge, generally been emphasized in the majority of teacher training programs available at our traditional universities. Yet, to my mind, this is the most significant level of learning that teachers need to discover if they are to truly educate their students. We have seen a brief survey of Wilber’s full spectrum scheme. Each phase in the process of development seems to involve emotional turmoil, no matter how you punctuate the cycle. Beginning with the phase of identification, there is emotional attachment, then the inevitable boredom, disappointment, anxiety, fear, yearning and unfulfilled desire of the dissatisfaction phase, leading eventually to disidentification. Letting go is a kind of death and involves a grieving process of denial, anger, sadness and acceptance, which leads to taking a rebirth by opening up to a new reality in the phase of reidentification, which provokes new anxiety and fear, eventually resolving itself again into attachment. Learning how to ride out the weather of these emotional storms facilitates our sailing along the route of developmental unfolding, and gradually these emotions themselves are transformed into intuitive wisdom.

Wilber (1980) explains that at this particular level of development, meditation becomes the primary way to encourage and foster the process of uncovering inner wisdom and other potential levels of awareness that naturally unfold in the succeeding phases of development.
Meditation is, if anything, a sustained instrumental path of transcendence. And since—as we saw—transcendence and development are synonymous, it follows that meditation is simply sustained development or growth. It is not primarily a way to reverse things but a way to carry them on. It is the natural and orderly unfolding of successively higher-order unities, until there is only one Unity, until all potential is actual, until all the ground unconscious is unfolded as consciousness. It is what an individual, at this present stage of human evolution, has to do in order to develop beyond this present stage of human evolution, and advance toward that only God which is the goal of all creation. (p. 93)

This statement brings perspective to our central question: Why should teachers meditate and take part in contemplative practices? Although I find Wilber's concepts of evolution and development to be perhaps a bit too rigid and deterministic, shaped by a sequential and rational mode of thought, his description of the process and phases of development nevertheless serves as a convincing argument to persuade those who might tend to be skeptical or even cynical in regard to the value of meditation and the contemplative path. Using meditation to train teachers to respect the wisdom inherent within the experience of their own emotions doesn't need to involve any particular form of spirituality or the cultural trappings of any particular religious tradition. The Buddhist meditation techniques for developing mindfulness and awareness and the Maitri space awareness practices for highlighting the experiences of the elemental emotional qualities as the five wisdoms are available as a valuable resource. Teachers in training can take advantage of this resource without subscribing to other Buddhist ideas or practices. To combine these meditation techniques with a contemplative approach to the study of child development could I believe awaken within potential teachers their child-like energies of curiosity, caring, excitement, playfulness, power, wonder, and the sense of magical and poetic correspondences that make life a sacred dance among the elements.

The five elemental wisdoms, or at least an early glimpse experience of them, begins to become available at this transition stage between normal psychological development and
what has traditionally been regarded as spiritual development. However, from my perspective, a person doesn’t need to feel particularly spiritually inclined, spiritually hungry, or spiritually committed to benefit from such meditation and contemplative practices. By choosing to concentrate on the elemental qualities of these five types of wisdom, I have meant to convey the extent to which they are grounded in the earthly existence of our ordinary, everyday life.

Teachers in training could glimpse an intuitive form of wisdom, which is a natural link with the experience of children. Having understood how meditation and contemplative practice can enhance the development of this wisdom potential, let us now explore the distinct qualities of the five elements as archetypes related to different modes of being and different modes of wisdom.
CHAPTER 8 NOTES

3. Note that in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition the experience in the womb, during birth, and in early infancy are said to be anything but a primal paradise. Gampopa (see Guenther, 1975, p. 65) says: 'If you were offered three gold coins to remain two days and nights in an unclean pit, you would not accept, however much you might want the money, and yet the misery in the womb is worse than that.' And of birth: 'Finally there arises the so-called "face looking down" wind. It turns the face of the foetus downward and the child reaches the outer world with indrawn hands. This pain is as if being drawn through a net of iron wires.' And of infancy: 'for a long time the newly-born stays in misery and suffers much pain, heat, darkness and unpleasantness.' Watching a baby's struggle with digestion, intense physical sensations, and helplessness, it is hard to believe that it is anything but uncomfortable when they are not either asleep or at mother's breast.
5. Wilber (1980), p. 26. See Kierkegaard (1944, 1954). In distilling wisdom from the Greek, Jewish and Christian traditions, Kierkegaard asserts that the central concept of Christianity, 'the concept which makes all things new, is the fullness of time, is the instant as eternity, and yet this instant is at once the future and the past' (1944, p. 81). He says that we sin when we live 'in the instant abstracted from the eternal' (p. 83) and that from this arises dread: 'dread of the possible and of the future' (p. 82).
7. For a detailed description of these categories of mental events, see Guenther and Kawamura (1975), a translation of Ye-shes rgyal-mtshan's *The Necklace of Clear Understanding*. These categories of mental events can be useful for teachers to study, especially in conjunction with meditation practice, where one can begin to watch them arise and recognize that they need not control one's life, leading one around like a carrot dangled in front of mule.
13. Bateson (1972), in an essay 'The Logical Categories of Learning and Communication' (p. 279), establishes hierarchical levels of learning where each newly established level involves discovering a whole new set of alternatives by stepping outside of the singularity of context of each previous level. From the perspective of this scheme, Bateson explains that his 'level II learning' has a characteristic of being self-validating, since 'behaviour is controlled by former learning II and therefore it will be of such a kind as to mold the total context to fit the expected punctuation,' which he says 'has the effect that such learning is almost ineradicable' (p. 301). (This is a similar phenomenon to what is sometimes pointed to in psychotherapy as a 'self-fulfilling prophecy' and which is identical to the Tibetan Buddhist notion of a 'realm.') To me, this seems to indicate that if a teacher has ineffective unconscious habits of communication which were laid down in early infancy (and most certainly all of us have at least some of these), such habits will certainly not be changed through conventional teacher education. Though Bateson sees learning III, which he defines as a "profound reorganization of character," as a rare occurrence, I believe the rigidly logical structure of his system is to blame for this assumption (as Bateson himself even suggests on pp. 307-308). As well, a simplistic linear model of time implies that the hierarchy must proceed in an orderly lock-step fashion, while from the more mystical experience of all time as eternally present, and from the perspective of Wilber's model and the 'perennial philosophy,' the higher levels, instead of being strictly formed out of the lower, may be in some way the pre-existing overall form of consciousness. It may be, therefore, that such a shift is possible in minute increments, as I am suggesting, instead of simply all at once. At any rate, Bateson has this to say about learning III: "If I stop at the level of learning II, "I" am the aggregate of those characteristics which I call my "character." "I" am my habits of acting in context and shaping and
perceiving the contexts in which I act. Self-hood is the product or aggregate of learning II. To the degree that we achieve learning III and learn to perceive and act in terms of the contexts of contexts, our "self" will take on a sort of irrelevance. The concept of "self" will no longer function as a nodal argument in the punctuation of experience" (p. 304).
PART III

Elements as Archetypes of Wisdom in Life and Death

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Chapter 9
An Old Idea

• Cosmos of fire ever-living • Nuclear reactions • Newton’s idea: God formed solid, massy particles • An intermediate, subtle and unseen sphere • Latent structure • Matter: a crystallization or precipitation of mind • Is reality the dream of a god? • The taste of a beet and the flight of a bird • The decomposition of corpses • Teaching as allowing the cycles of birth and death to turn unobstructedly • Finely tuning the senses to subtle changes in the environment •

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The energetic activity considered in physics is the emotional intensity entertained in life.

(A. N. Whitehead, 1958, p. 232)

There is not a single important idea or view that does not possess historical antecedents. Ultimately they are all founded on primordial archetypal forms whose concreteness dates from a time when consciousness did not think, but only perceived. Thoughts were objects of inner perception, not thought at all, but sensed as external phenomena seen or heard, so to speak. Thought was essentially revelation, not invented but forced upon us or bringing conviction through its immediacy and actuality. Thinking of this kind precedes the primitive ego-consciousness.

(C. G. Jung, 1959, p. 444)

As I am suggesting that young people training to become teachers might benefit from examining themselves, their temperament, personality type and learning style, through contemplative and meditation techniques based on a sacred system that looks at elemental archetypes of wisdom, it is perhaps useful to investigate some of the historical roots of the notion of elements in various cultures. How has this notion of elements been applied in the past, and how has it evolved in relation to the cultivation of wisdom and transpersonal awareness? Jung (1967), Smith (1976) and Wilber (1980) believe that the
only way to communicate meaning from one level or mode of consciousness to another is through symbols. In the following chapters, we will explore symbols from cultures around the world, which relate to the five elements, so as to hint at what lies beyond.

The concept that everything manifest and perceived within the universe, including our physical bodies, is made up of various combinations of a limited number of elements is an old idea. Among the pre-Socratic Greek philosophers, Thales, Anaximenes and Heraclitus suggested that all phenomena are composed of a single essential element or principle. For Thales, this foundation element was water, while Anaximenes suggested air, and Heraclitus believed the basis of all to be fire, or a kind of cosmic pervasive energy principle.

This world-order (kosmos) was made neither by god nor by man, but it was always and is and shall be; fire ever-living, being kindled by measures and being quenched by measures 1

In the West, Empedocles may have been the first to systemize physical, metaphysical and medical theories based on the four elements: earth, water, fire and air. Hippocrates elaborated upon this four-element system in his medical theories, and Plato's elemental cosmogeny described in the Timaeus became a standard in classical thought. Aristotle added the celestial ether to the other four, to make five. Ether was a kind of shimmering stuff of the spiritual realm. One significant difference between Eastern and Western thought seems to be the extent to which Aristotle established a strict separation between this fifth element and the other four. The Greek notion of elements was maintained throughout the Middle Ages, surviving in the West for more than two thousand years, or until the atomistic and purely materialistic notion of elements became fashionable in the scientific era.

The idea of atoms as the tiniest unit of matter was first conceived in the West by Democritus (c. 420 B.C.E.), who conceived of all matter as composed of atoms of the four elements. His atomistic idea, however, was not popular among most other Greek philosophers. Yet, as we know, it was picked up again much later in the doctrines of Newton.
Today, in developed nations, the prevailing belief of science numbers the fundamental elements at 110, including 98 that occur naturally and 12 (at least) which are revealed in nuclear reactions. This understanding of elements is based on a definition of the element invented in 1661 by the English chemist Robert Boyle, who first noted the distinction between a mixture and a chemical compound. Strictly concerned with material properties, Boyle’s definition of an element has become today: any substance that cannot be broken down into simpler substances by ordinary chemical processes.

This notion of elements from the realm of chemistry was influenced by the separation of mind and matter in the thought of Descartes and Newton and others, which in turn was influenced by the early separation of mind from matter implicit in the Judeo-Christian notion of God who created the world and remained outside of it. Newton wrote in 1730:

> It seems probable to me that God in the beginning formed matter in solid, massy, hard, impenetrable, movable particles, of such sizes and figures, and with such other properties and in such proportion to space as most conduced to the end for which he formed them.... And therefore, that nature may be lasting, the changes of corporeal things are to be placed only in the various separations and new associations and motions of these permanent particles....

The Greek idea of elements seems to have been more like what we might call today qualitative information pathways or archetypal principles than anything material. Earth, water, fire, and air existed in an intermediate, subtle and unseen sphere of activity that hovered between earthly affairs and the affairs of heaven, overlapping the two and connecting them. Like the sages of some other ancient cultures, the Greeks thought of the four elements primarily as non-material principles which ordered matter or gave form to it, rather than as building blocks of matter. The pre-Socratics conceived of the four elements as a template, or an intelligence that informed and gave diversity and complexity to the otherwise continuous, homogeneous stuff of matter.
Aristotle explains his understanding of Heraclitus and other pre-Socratics this way:

Some say that everything is in a state of becoming and flux, and that nothing has any firm existence, with the sole exception of one persisting thing beneath the changes, from which, by rearrangement, everything naturally comes to be; this seems to be the meaning of Heraclitus of Ephesus among many others.  

This pre-Socratic cosmological vision, similar to the Buddhist and Taoist approaches in the East, implies, I believe, a direct relationship between elements and wisdom. Heraclitus tells us that 'Latent structure is master of obvious structure' and that 'One thing is wisdom: to be skilled in the plan upon which all things are controlled throughout the universe.' The elements were a fundamental part of this universal plan. And it seems that skill in working with the elements implies the ability to influence matter through a living awareness of its latent structure.

According to Huston Smith (1976), this view is based on a 'primordial tradition' grounded in qualitative concerns, rather than quantitative concerns, a view which is expressed in the notion of the Great Chain of Being which has always maintained that matter is a crystallization of mind. This view that all phenomena are one continuous process was gradually lost or given up in favour of the materialistic and atomistic view.

However, the view of the 'primordial tradition' has been upheld in Buddhist philosophy. Buddhist thought arose within the Indian cultural context of Hindu myths and beliefs, including the notion that our reality is nothing more than the dream of a great god. The non-theistic Buddhist rendering of this consciousness-first, from-the-top-down perspective may be more palatable in our own time. In the Mahayana teachings, an ordering principle, which we tend to call mind, is felt to precede matter.

In the Tibetan Buddhist approach, the five elemental ordering principles take on a different type of manifestation at several levels of reality. The level that we are particularly interested in, for the purposes of teacher training, is that level of experience having to do with communication and the subtle energies which can either be manifest as the five
confused emotions or as the five elemental wisdoms. A practical discussion will come later. However, regarding the relationship between matter and these five elements, it is interesting to note that the Buddha is reported to have taught that in the *abhidharma* 'all materiality can be seen as having the aspects of earth (solidity, tangibility), water (cohesion), fire (radiation, sustaining), air (movement), and space (accommodation)' (Trungpa & Nalanda, 1986, p. 222).

Summarizing the primordial perspective, Grossinger (1980), an anthropologist interested in ancient medical theories, begins a chapter discussing the various conceptions and practical applications of elements and humours in diverse systems of traditional medicine with these words:

Elements are primary units of nature. They give matter all its qualities, ranging from the striations of stone and the color and taste of a beet to the flight of a bird and the lilt in someone's laugh. They are underlying predispositions to form that nature realizes at all its levels of being....

The elements are in constant motion and flux throughout nature, and nothing that is made of them can remain fixed, as Heraclitus describes: "Fire lives in the death of earth, air in the death of fire, water in the death of air, and earth in the death of water."\(^{10}\)

Barbara Walker (1986, 1988) thinks that somewhere in the Neolithic age it was noted that there were only four ways to dispose of the dead, short of cannibalism. Bodies could either be buried, cremated, sunk in water, sent out to sea, or exposed to carrion birds of the air. Each of these were funerary rites known to the ancients, and the important association of the elements with the decomposition of corpses gave rise to a further association between the elements and the natural cycles of birth and death, as well as with ancestor spirits.

The world wide tendency to worship dead ancestors, which many anthropologists see as the original impulse toward god making, set up the four elemental spirits to embody those ancestors whose souls had gone into them. There was no such hard-and-fast distinction between
the individual and the environment as is recognized today. Those who had died were thought to have literally become part of the living water, living fire, living earth, sky, cloud, or wind. Such ghosts and disembodied souls were everywhere. Thus ancestor worship fostered reverence for the environment. (1986, pp. 4-5)

A re-enlivening of this kind of reverence which forms a link between inner emotional experience and the natural transformative processes of the greater system we call the environment is central to my notion of elemental wisdom. Death, or something resembling death, is the pivotal event in any transformative process. The death of the physical body is one kind of death which can symbolize the death of various mind forms or structures of consciousness.

Our ancestors believed that the elements played a part in the many-layered system of correspondences between the earth and sky, between the microcosm and macrocosm. The mundane, terrestrial elements of the living were transformed by death to become sacred forms, gods, goddesses and lesser spirits of power. From our current perspective, cycles of birth and death as well, as the arising and dissolving of distinct forms of consciousness, can be understood as the moving force behind the processes of learning and development. Could it be that the elements also play a part in these transformations? I am proposing that wisdom in teaching may have to do with developing this kind of reverence which allows the natural processes of elemental transformation to occur in an unobstructed manner.

Aside from funeral rites and ancestor worship, how might it have happened that these elemental archetypes formed in the experience of our earliest ancestors? We can imagine a small band of our most ancient ancestors, early hominids, such as those whose fossilized bones have been found in eastern Africa by Leakey. They might be *Homo Habilis* or *Australopithecus*, a wandering group somewhere on the plains of Africa during a prolonged drought. With their lips and tongues parched by the fiery sun, they finally come upon a bubbling spring of cool, fresh water. The contrast in sensations of dry heat and cool wet must have made a deep and lasting impression. Likewise, the experience of fierce
winds blowing sand on a barren landscape in contrast to a gentle breeze blowing through a fertile river valley must have touched the lives of both nomadic tribes and those first bands who learned to cultivate plants for food. It was probably noted very early that when someone died, the wind of their breath no longer flowed in and out of their body. And looking to the six directions – east, south, west, north, down, and up – to perhaps discover where this mysterious life wind came from and where it had gone, the ancients were sure to fix their gaze upon the sky, translucent blue by day or clouded, and speckled with the language of stars by night, which inspired in them visions of worlds beyond this world and heavens where the breath of ancestors resided as gods and goddesses dancing like the stars in elegant circles.

At some point, the sensations and deep impressions of the power of the elements – earth, water, fire and air – gave rise to what we might refer to as animistic nature spirits or elemental divinities. Early cultures, such as those that grew up in the Middle East within the fertile crescent between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, those in China, and those in the Indus Valley, were dependent upon the fecundity of the earth, the nourishing rain, the warmth of the sun and fire in the hearth, the breath of life, and the winds that moved clouds, changed the weather and brought the scent of game. The people of such early cultures knew these elements as intimately as they knew their mother and father, their brother and sister, their mate, or their best friend. Through a keen intelligence that involved finely tuning their senses to discriminate subtle changes in their environment, primitive peoples were constantly in touch with the ebb and flow of the elements. Beginning with water, let us now look at how people from various cultures have regarded the elements in their sacred lore and cosmological intuitions.
CHAPTER 9 NOTES

1 Heraclitus fr. 3, quoted in Hussey (1972), p. 48.
2 For a history of the modern theory of chemical elements see Farber, E. (1969).
4 According to Huston Smith (1976), the term intermediate, which he uses to describe this plane of mind, comes originally from Plato's *metaxy*, which Paul Friedlander (1958) says 'must have been of the utmost significance to him.' For Plato, this was the idea that 'the demonic' was a realm 'intermediate' between the human and the divine, a realm that because of its intermediary position 'unites the cosmos with itself.' Smith also quotes (and translates) Thomas Aquinas: 'the order of reality is found to be such that it is impossible to reach one end from the other without passing through the middle' (p. 38). We might make a tentative correspondence between this intermediate realm and the *sambogakaya*, in Buddhist cosmology. *Sambogakaya* is a Sanskrit term known as *longs-ku* in Tibetan. It refers to the realm of a Buddha's bliss body, or the speech of a Buddha, including the subtle means by which wisdom is communicated, and transmitted from person to person. This exists as an intermediate sphere of activity between the mind of a Buddha, *dharmakaya* in Sanskrit, *chos-sku* in Tibetan, and the body of a Buddha, *nirmanakaya*, *sprul-sku*. Thus, it serves as an intermediary between the completely formless energy of wisdom mind and the concrete world of forms we know as our terrestrial experience. Although Jung positions his Archetypes in his famous 'Collective Unconscious' he does cite Plato's concept of the Idea as a 'primordial disposition that performs and influences thoughts,' as an antecedent formulation of the archetype hypothesis. Plato's ideas exist primarily in the highest divine realm, although the intermediate realm is conditioned by them too just as much as the terrestrial realm of human sensual experience. Whether or not Jung’s Collective Unconscious can be equated with this intermediate subtle sphere is perhaps a matter of speculation and debate. Smith points out that Jung, like Freud, despite his obvious leanings toward the spiritual, was concerned with having his theories accepted as scientific, and for this reason the collective unconscious was conceived as a consequence of human evolution rather than following the primordial from-the-top-down tradition. Following Darwin, not Plato, was the fashion in the scientific circles of Jung's day.

5 Both the Indian and Chinese elemental formulations are based within a similar intermediate or subtle sphere of reality that deals with the forms and patterns that exist between the manifest and the unmanifest potential, between matter and spirit, between earth and heaven. These elements, like those of the Greeks, find their clearest expression in medical theories and treatment philosophies. For an extensive description of the psychological profiles according to the Chinese elemental system of medicine as it is practiced in North America today, see Hammer (1990).

7 Heraclitus fr. 54, quoted in Hussey (1972), p. 35.
8 Heraclitus fr. 41, quoted in Hussey (1972), p. 36.
9 Two entertaining essays that uphold a similar view, both written in the early 1930s by knighted Englishmen, practitioners of the scientific disciplines of mathematics, physics, and astronomy, are 'A Universe of Pure Thought' by Sir James Jeans and 'Mind Stuff' by Sir Arthur Eddington, and can be found in Wilber (1984).
Chapter 10

Water

• Before being and non-being • Earth a wave in the heart of the ocean • Two rivers mingle giving birth to all • Birth of Venus from sea foam • The spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters • Baptism: immersion in pre-existence a death and rebirth • Seat of the divine spirit • Apotheosis sprinkle • Let's not de-mystify mystery • Wellspring of Fair Dances • A knee-high house of dry grass • A flash of realization of the non-temporal moment • A symbol for that first spontaneous birth of form •

* * * * * * * * * * * *

In the amniotic fluid which surrounded us in our mother's womb, referred to by midwives as the bag of waters, as well as in the salty, blood-like water of the sea, wherein life first formed itself, as evolutionists tell us, in the primordial soup of complex protein molecules, we see or intuit the essence of water.

Neither Non-Being nor being existed then.
Neither air or the firmament above existed.
What was moving with such force? Where? under whose care?
Was it the deep and fathomless water?

Rgveda 10.121.1

Water has no shape or form of its own (except when frozen), it is fluid and elusive, yet it has obvious life-giving properties. For this reason, it is associated with formlessness and the birth of form. Rudhardt (1987) explains that in cosmological myths of origin, water often symbolizes the primordial undifferentiated chaos. As the questions from the Indian Rgvedas above suggest 'the deep and fathomless water' is associated with a state prior to being and non-being, a pregnant state ready to burst forth into the cosmogenic process. As Eliade (1963) explains: 'The waters symbolize the entire universe of the virtual; they are the fons et origo, the reservoir of all the potentialities of existence; they
precede every form and sustain every creation’ (p. 188). He goes on to tell us that ‘The exemplary image of the whole creation is the island that suddenly “manifests” itself in the waves.’ This is beautifully expressed in the Indian Atharvaveda ‘[The Earth] was originally a wave in the heart of the ocean.’

In some of these cosmological origin myths, according to Rudhardt (1987) and Eliade (1952, 1963) the water itself is endowed with a certain spontaneity, as in the early Orphic Greek cosmogony, wherein the primordial water gradually becomes muddy, and as the mud congeals and condenses, it forms into the earth. Then, from a combination of water and earth, a mysterious god is born who then engenders the cosmic egg. In Hindu cosmogonies as well, water seems a kind of amniotic fluid surrounding the divine embryo, seed or a golden egg from which Brahma, the ancestor of all beings, is born. Fertile water which gives spontaneous birth to gods is also played out in some Egyptian texts, which suggest that Nun, the water god, gave birth to the sun god and thereby is also known as the father of all gods. Babylonian cosmology holds that before the beginning, two great rivers or bodies of water, Apsu and Tiamat, also personified as male and female deities, mingled their currents to produce another divine couple who continued to procreate, making Apsu and Tiamat the ancestors of all creatures. Homer has preserved a similar Greek system whereby Okeanos and Tethys, two currents of water as deities, join their streams together to produce all beings, who will constitute and rule the universe. The birth of the Roman goddess Venus or the Greek Aphrodite from sea foam is another example of water’s spontaneous fecundity.

In other myths of origin, a deity outside the water effects the transformation, bringing about form and the diversity of manifestations from water. As in the Book of Genesis:

And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

Genesis 1:2.
This water in Genesis connotes a negative value of non-being and no-form, while the breath of god is the animating force which brings about creation. That an outside force or prime mover is needed to bring about form and creation is also represented in this Siberian story of the first Shaman quoted by Rudhardt (1987):

In the Beginning, water was everywhere. Doh the first shaman, flew over the primordial ocean in the company of some birds. Finding nowhere to rest, he asked the red-breasted loon to dive into the ocean and bring back some earth from the bottom. This the loon did, and on the third attempt, he managed to bring back a little bit of mud in his beak. Doh made of this an island on the original ocean which became the earth. (p. 352)

Whether or not the original waters spontaneously erupt into being or are animated from outside, the primordial formlessness of water, as an amniotic pre-birth suspension, brings us to its power as the holy water of baptism, anointment and empowerment. As Eliade (1958) says ‘immersion in the waters symbolizes a regression into the pre-formal, reintegration into the undifferentiated mode of pre-existence. Emergence repeats the cosmogenic act of formal manifestation; while immersion is equivalent to a dissolution of forms. That is why the symbolism of the Waters includes Death as well as Rebirth’ (p. 151). Myths of the deluge, such as the biblical one of Noah’s Ark, are comparable to baptism in that there is a destruction of the old degenerative order and the beginning of a new bloodline.

Eliade (1958) explains that the ‘Fathers of the (Christian) Church did not fail to exploit some of the pre-Christian and universal values of the Water-symbolism,’ freely adapting them to suit the Christian historical drama. He quotes from one early Church Father Tertullian, explaining that water is primarily ‘seat of the divine spirit, who then preferred it to all the other elements ... the Holy Spirit, coming down from heaven, hovers over the waters, which it sanctifies by its fecundity .... That which formerly healed the
body, today cures the soul; that which procured health in time procures salvation in eternity’ (p. 153).

Similarly, in the empowerment ceremonies of Hindu and Buddhist tantra, a type of apotheosis is performed upon the initiate by the master through the use of various implements, primarily the vase for sprinkling water. Thus the Sanskrit term abhisheka, which refers to the entire empowerment ceremony, literally means to sprinkle that which brings about both a death or dissolution of the ego and rebirth as a spontaneous deity or wisdom principle. To fully embody this wisdom principle, following the ceremony the initiate needs to work for long hours in diligent meditation practice. 3

A fuller description of water in myth and religion would include the animistic nature spirits that inhabit watery places and are immanent within them, such as those of waterfalls, springs, wells, lakes, brooks, streams, rivers, river deltas, and even those of swamps and low-lying wet lands, not to mention the gods of the seas and oceans. There are also the monsters and serpents encountered by heroes, as well as sea nymphs, mermaids, water fairies and other watery creatures, such as the nagas of India.

Twentieth-century mythology scholars such as Campbell and Jung would tell us that the slaying of watery serpents and monsters by heroes like Odysseus represents a conquering of some powerful negative forces within the depths of our collective unconscious. Profound and fluid, oceans are (along with the underworld) a convenient metaphor for the Jungian concept of the collective unconscious. However, if we stop to think for a moment, recognizing that all words are merely labels acting as metaphors for conscious experience, which in itself is fluid, elusive, and ultimately formless like water, we realize that we can turn this statement around to say that the collective unconscious is one metaphor for what I am referring to as the element of water. Thinking in this way, we might begin to recognize our contemporary bias for pseudo-scientific terms that tend to demystify mystery. This is in no way a discredit to Jung, or other twentieth-century mythologists, for I am quite sure that they would encourage us also to think in this way,
and to listen to ancient myths with our heart and not from our head. My point is this: In exploring some of the mythological and religious symbols and imagery to evoke a sense of what I mean by the subtle elements of water, earth, fire, air and ether, I do not wish to fall prey to what we might call mythology-ism, a branch of scientism.

The cosmogenic process that says earth forms out of the water as an island or a gradual congealing of water can also be reversed so that the solidity of earth mind finds a kind of playful plasticity by rejoining with the water. Twenty kilometres west of Athens, in the outer courtyard of the ruined Sanctuary of Demeter (a Greek Earth Goddess) at Eleusis, there is a well constructed of two layers of stone, laid in two concentric circles, with the central stones raised up surrounding the hole, giving access to a sacred spring known to the ancient Athenian’s as *Kallichoron* or the ‘Wellspring of Fair Dances.’

Once, the goddess Demeter herself, disguised as an old woman, appeared at this well and was led from there by the daughters of the Eleusinian queen Metaneria to the palace, where she became the nurse to the queen’s infant son Demophon. At night she would feed him ambrosia and immerse him in the flames of the palace hearth to immortalize him. When the queen discovered this and begged the old woman to stop her strange rites, Demeter revealed herself in full glory, and angrily denouncing humans for meddling in divine affairs, refused to continue the prince’s deification. When the goddess calmed down and remembered the hospitality of her Eleusinian hosts, she promised the queen that an annual feast would be held in Demophon’s honour. ‘Come now,’ she commanded,

*let all the people build me a great temple*
*And an alter under it, beneath the city and its high wall,*
*Above the wellspring of Fair Dances, upon a rising hill.*

*(Hymn to Demeter 270-2)*

According to Harner (1980), shamans are said to enter the earth through sacred springs, and then travelling through the underground waterways, arise again at distant springs or rivers, perhaps on the opposite side of a mountain range, or across a vast desert.
I once climbed a steep trail up a lush ravine in the remote mountains southeast of Oxica, Mexico, to the site of a small spring regarded as sacred by the local villagers. With my friend, originally from this village, and me were several children – her brothers and sisters, cousins, nieces and nephews. Among them was a young girl of about thirteen years. While my friend and I chatted in English I didn’t notice this girl diligently working away.

Standing near the large boulder where the spring bubbled up and staring into the water, I became absorbed in listening while my friend somewhat sceptically recounted some stories of the healing powers of the spring and other local lore of village miracles attributed to the deity of the spring, some going back to the days when Spanish soldiers and missionaries first came to the remote valley.

When it came time to leave, I was amazed to find at my feet a few paces from the spring a knee-high house nestled in the foliage at the edge of the small clearing. Cleverly crafted from sticks and reeds and neatly covered with dry grasses tied into clumps in the manner of a thatched roof, complete with windows, a door and a covered front porch, the diminutive house was enchanting to look at. There was a small fence around it, and in the front yard there were small dry grass figures clearly representing a woman, a man, a child, a horse and a dog. My friend, who had been living in the United States for eight years, was a little embarrassed when she explained that her little sister wanted to get married and move into a house of her own, and that this was her offering to the deity of the spring.

To summarize the meaning of the water element, Eliade (1963) tells us:

In whatever religious context we find them, the Waters invariably preserve their function: they dissolve or abolish the forms of things, ‘wash away sins’ are at once purifying and regenerative. It is their lot both to precede the creation and to re-absorb it, incapable as they are of surpassing their own modality—that is, of manifestations themselves in forms. The Waters cannot get beyond the state of the virtual, of what is latent. Everything that has form manifests itself above the waters, by detaching itself from them. On the other hand, as
soon as it has separated from the waters and has ceased to be potential (virtual), every form comes under the laws of Time and Life; it acquires limitations, participates in the universal becoming, is subject to history, decays away and is finally emptied of substance unless it be regenerated by periodic immersions in the Waters, repetitions of the 'deluge' with its cosmogenic corollary. The purpose of the ritual lustrations and purifications is to gain a flash of realization of the non-temporal moment (in illo tempore) in which the creation took place; they are symbolical repetitions of the birth of worlds or of the 'new [person].' (p.212).

In the Buddhist skhandhas, describing the origin of consciousness in each instant, the primordial formlessness that we have seen related here to the elemental waters is, in part, replaced by primordial space. Water instead evokes a sense of that first spontaneous birth of form in the instant of naked duality. The entire spontaneous generation goes something like this: From the primordial emptiness of space comes the sudden forming of the waters. Then the simple duality of water congeals to earth. Earth gives rise to the fire in a brilliant burst of coloured light and heat, from which a wind of mind arises and space molds itself around the emerging consciousness, completing the illusion of a solid self perceiving a solid 'reality.'

The immersion that brings about a 'flash of realization of the non-temporal moment' which Eliade talks about has to do with a stripping away of the more complex layers of consciousness related to the other elements. This is symbolically acted out in baptism. Just as the eyes of a newly baptised person, arising from the river, see as if for the first time, the quality of mind as it first emerges out of the primordial unity is clear-cut and pristine, conditioned only by the simplicity of original duality and not yet complicated by earth, fire, and air consciousness. In the Tibetan Buddhist understanding of the repeated unfolding of consciousness, this water consciousness is related with intellect and clear seeing. It is birth of form (water) from the formlessness of vibrant space.

Eliade says: 'The Waters cannot get beyond the state of the virtual, of seeds and of what is latent.’ In the same way the intellect though clear and precise, is incapable of
surpassing its own modality. It cannot manifest as earthy substance, compassionate fire or powerful wind. When we expect it to do so we are generally disappointed, or worse if we truly believe that intellect is enough, the world we create with our minds becomes, like food grown in depleted soil, insufficient to sustain the true health of our bodies or any higher spiritual aspects of our beings. The over-reliance on intellect to the exclusion of other ways of understanding, in our schools and universities, has depleted our educational experience in North America. I believe it is time we nourish our minds with something more than clear water.
CHAPTER 10 NOTES


2 Atharvaveda 12.1, quoted in Rudhardt, p. 352.


4 Jung, Campbell, Eliade, Smith, Watts and others advocate that we explore a more highly developed mythopoetic process, or what Wilber calls 'vision-logic.' For Wilber, this is the mode of cognition used by mystics, visionary poets, prophets, spiritual alchemists, shamans and anyone who fully partakes in the most sacred rites and rituals of any truly transformative religion. As we have seen Wilber tells us that although vision-logic is similar to the magical thinking of childhood and primitive mythological thinking, it goes far beyond these and also encompasses within its scope the more limited rational and sequential thinking of normal adult ego consciousness. It is this limited way of thinking, the rational and sequential thinking of normal adult ego consciousness, disconnected from both the magical thinking of childhood and vision-logic, that tends to demystify life with the dogma of scientism. In Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhist teachings, one of the highest levels of realization or modes of awareness is called mahamudra (Sk) which means the great seal or the great symbol. Trungpa (1973) explains that at this stage everything is seen as a symbol of itself. The tone of this discussion also reminds me of the way in which Trungpa, while giving a somewhat technical talk, would sometimes smile coyly, and, in a voice a bit underneath his breath with a rising intonation pattern, say: '...or as the Buddhologists would say... when he wished to quote or refer to terms invented by a certain class of religious and linguistic scholars.

5 I have paraphrased this myth from a retelling in Miller (1986), p. 20.
Chapter 11

Earth

• Mother of all, destroyer of all • Fertility rites to Mother Earth goddesses • She is the womb of all • Gaia gives direct feedback • Honour her, she treats you well; pollute her, she will destroy you • Delphi priestesses, the mouthpiece of Mother Earth • The secret of life comes from the ground • *Eriu* mates with mortal kings • Earth mother’s son, the grain, dies and resurrects to bring life • Clay dolls anointed with the sacred blood of life •

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The earth is ever-present beneath our feet, perhaps that is why it is easy to take her for granted. Yet, if we reflect for an instant, we cannot deny that we are completely dependent upon the earth as the mother of all things, the basis of material reality. It is out of the earth that all things grow, and back to her they must go as they die and rot. The rich substance of the earth lends itself to a seemingly endless creation of impermanent forms and then reabsorbs them.

A Zulu myth tells of a thirsty woman who searched for water in a lake without frogs. After passing many lakes with frogs she finally found one without frogs where the water was sweet so she drank a lot.

She thought she was alone until she noticed the animals, from every direction, of every size, gathering at the water – bison, wildebeest, elephant, lion, leopard, zebra, monkey, rabbit, even the insects. They drank and watched her. Rock rabbit came to her, ‘Woman, be careful. Our mother is the mother of all the animals.’ Wild dog trembled, ‘Woman, the lake is our mother’s milk.’ Leopard growled, ‘She is dreadful.’ Then she heard her, her footsteps echoing. The sky darkened and her body filled all of space. Her back was an entire mountain. Her legs were four pillars of stone. Her mouth was the opening of a cave. She had thousands of breasts. The Mother of the Animals was hungry. Four antelope, servants of the great Mother,
called out, 'Mother, why don’t you rest first and eat later.' The Mother tore her eyes from the woman and lay down on the earth. All the animals crawled onto her back, between her toes, in her mouth, under her breasts. Nestled tenderly on her body, they all went to sleep. The four antelopes lifted up the woman with her pail of sweet water and carried her back to her village. The Mother of the Animals brought forth all the creatures, even the sheep and the goats, even the people, and she takes them back.1

Recent interest in primitive matrilineal societies2 and the earth goddess cults3 of pre-agrarian and the earliest agrarian cultures has recovered evidence supporting the claim that the earliest forms of religion and myth were centred on magic rites and sacrifices to goddesses of fertility and abundance frequently associated with the great mother of all, Mother Earth. (Bachofen, 1967; Neumann, 1963; Stone, 1976; Gimbutas, 1989, 1991).

Gimbutas (1991) writes:

The yearly renewal of her fecundity is her fundamental miracle. Ancient mysteries, enacted throughout prehistoric and historic millennia—in caves, cemeteries, temples, and in open fields—were for the purpose of expressing gratitude to the source of all life and nourishment and to virtually participate in the secret of the earth’s abundance’ (p. 230).

The primordial goddess, like the Waters, are also associated with the oceanic dark formlessness of chaos that existed before creation when the elements were not separate, but were combined in a homogeneous mass that was neither fluid nor solid, neither hot nor cold. According to Hindu sages, this is the time of the Great Goddess, the womb of all, the primordial ocean of blood where all things exist in potential only, waiting to be born. Once born out of the Waters, life becomes dependent upon the nurturing qualities and abundance of the earth mother to sustain it.

Gimbutas (1991) tells us that many clay figurines symbolizing the fertility of the Earth Goddess have been found in Europe, dating back to the Upper Paleolithic period. 'She is portrayed as a naturalistic nude with hands placed on her enlarged belly, her pregnant form apparently likened to the fecundity of the seeded earth and all its creatures.'
Gimbutas further explains that in the early Neolithic 'this already ancient deity was transformed into an agricultural goddess, the progenitor and protectress of all fruits of the harvest, but especially grain and bread' (p. 228).

The goddess earth-mother principle later to be associated with Demeter and Persephone in Greece and as the mother-moist-earth in Slavic lands, called Nerthus by ancient Germans and Zemyna or Zemes Mate in the Baltic, has survived to this day. In the Catholic Church. She is Mary, the mother of god. And as the Black Madonna of Poland, and elsewhere in Mexico and South America she is still associated with the dark, rich soil of the nurturing earth.

The Earth Mother has been known in various Indo-European dialects as Urd, Erda, Ertha, Hretha, Eortha and Gaia. Eliade and Sullivan (1987) note that Herodotus claimed that all known names for the earth at his time were female, but perhaps he did not know the Egyptian male earth god Geb, consort to the female goddess of the sky Nut.

The character of these earth goddesses seems to have been very much rooted in a direct and ordinary experience of earth. The earth gives us direct feedback. Like the principle of gravity, it is very dependable; if we are rushed and clumsy, we fall. Basically, what we put out is what we get back. This is becoming devastatingly obvious on a global scale. If we continue to pollute Gaia- the results will be ecological disaster.

Gaia was the earth goddess of the pre-Greek Mycenaean civilization that ruled over the island of Crete at the palace of Knossos up until as late as 1100 B.C.E. Adopted by the Greeks, she became their oldest deity, grandmother of the entire Greek pantheon, and the first ruler of Mount Olympus before it was appropriated by her grandson Zeus. She was the divine principle revered and invoked at numerous mountain shrines, including the Delphic oracle, which was later taken over by the male sun god, Apollo.

The priestesses of the shrine at Delphi were regarded as intermediaries between the Great Mother Goddess and the world of human beings. They were the mouthpiece of Mother Earth. Their wisdom was revered as the highest in the land. This wisdom is
particularly the wisdom of birth and death, creativity and destruction, as well as the nurturing wisdom that supports and fosters life. We can see these principles in this Homeric hymn addressed to Gaia (Eliade & Sullivan, 1987):

It is the earth I sing, securely enthroned, the mother of all things, venerable ancestress feeding upon her soil all that exists... To thee it belongs to give life to mortals and take it from them.... Happy the man favored with thy good will! For him the soil of life is rich with good harvest; in his fields, the flocks thrive, and his house is full of wealth.

Hymn to Earth 1 ff.5 (p.535)

The Sumerians, the Minoan civilization of Crete, the ancient Greeks (Gadon 1989), and most of the wise in ancient and sacred cultures knew that if they treated the Great Earth Mother with respect and honoured her she would continue to flourish and even ripen further, rewarding them with not only a bountiful harvest but also beautiful vistas, temperate climates, lush forests, medicinal herbs and a profuse assortment of ever-expanding varieties of flora and fauna. This richness, in turn, brought leisure, culture and peace of mind to those who honoured and respected her. Gadon (1989) and Gimbutas (1991) describe the rich cultures of those societies, whose lives revolved around a deep rooted faith in the Earth Goddess such as in the Minoan civilization of Crete, as a kind of paradise of free expression, social harmony and enlightening esthetic pleasures of all kinds as depicted in their sensitive and beautiful art. These were places where people did not worship the male gods of war. However, when a group of people or a king, or even the male gods, showed disrespect for the Earth Goddess, or performed acts that went against her nature, as in the myth of Oedipus, the myth of Demeter and Persephone and many others, her wrath was terrible, causing earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, drought, famine, sickness, discontent and even war.

...The cruelest of years/ Did the goddess ordain for men on the nourishing earth./ No seed sprouted in the rich soil, for bright crowned Demetr lay hidden/ Oxen in vain dragged the bent plows
through the fields./And white barley was scattered without avail on
the ground./By terrible famine she would have destroyed the whole
race of men.

Homer Hymn to Demeter, II. 2.230-33.

This blight of infertility was an expression of Demeter's wrath over the kidnapping
and rape of her daughter Persephone by Hades of the underworld in collusion with his
brother, the chief patriarch Zeus. Now, our patriarchal and industrial culture, descended
from Zeus, Hades and other male gods like them, continues to rape the earth and her
daughters. Having seen the earth as a blue-green jewel-like goddess from outer space we
are only now beginning to learn through ecological science the complex miracle of her
nurturing and the potential disasters, drought, famine and disease that can occur as a result
of our irreverence, hubris and polluting lifestyles.

The Apache Indians said that in the beginning all living things were born from the
earth, 'just like a child being born from its mother.' For all life 'the place of emergence is
the womb of the earth' (Campbell, 1959, p. 240). The Gypsies say, 'The Earth is our
mother ... the secret of life comes from the ground' (Derlon, 1977, p. 135). In the
mythological traditions of Ireland, the earth-mother-goddess Eriu mates with mortal kings
to bring about the fertility of the land (Green, 1992, p. 92).

Many of the early pagan myths, rituals, symbols, and holy days later to be adapted
into patriarchal religions began as aspects of worship of the mother earth, the goddess of
fertility. For example, Campbell (1959) has pointed out that the roots of the Christian myth
of a son being sacrificed and then resurrected to bring eternal life to others has its origins in
the ancient and magical rites involved with planting grain in the earth, which I presume
arose at the time of the agricultural revolution about 20,000 years B.C.E. In these, the son
of the Earth Mother was typically the dying and resurrected god who personified the grain.
His death at harvest time brought life to the people. Then, in the spring at planting time, he
descended into the tomb/womb of the Mother Earth, only to rise again from death as a fresh
crop of grain, to be sacrificed again at harvest time.
The origin of Adam’s name can also be traced back to women’s magical fertility rites. Harold Bloom (1990) asserts that the Adam and Eve story which we find in the Torah was put together by a clever satirical writer and lover of puns, possibly a woman, living and writing in or near the court of King Solomon’s son King Rehoboam of Judah sometime shortly after the death of Solomon in 922 B.C.E. Barbara Walker (1988) explains that the Hebrew word *adamah*, often translated as ‘red earth,’ is perhaps more accurately rendered as ‘bloody clay’ and may therefore refer to the magical fertility practice performed by, or very often *on behalf of*, women who wished to become pregnant. According to Walker, these women would make clay dolls and anoint them with menstrual blood – ‘the sacred blood of life’ – in order to encourage the conception of real children. This sympathetic magic was also a re-enactment of a common creation myth in which the great mother goddess fashions men and women from clay. The Mesopotamian goddess Aramaiti, whose name means literally ‘mother of the people made of clay,’ predates the biblical God, who also made people out of clay (Eliade & Sullivan, 1987).

That our physical being is part of the substance and living richness of the earth makes us all her children. And just as psychotherapeutic teachings have stressed the importance of developing a conscious relationship with our individual mothers, so I believe coming to know our common mother in a conscious way can lead toward liberation into a subtle awareness of interconnections and a mature earthy wisdom.

Roszak (1993) develops a psychology based on overcoming our repressed awareness of our connection with the earth. In my clinical practice with people suffering from the effects of childhood trauma I guide them through specific meditations designed to help them establish and maintain an awareness of how their body feels connected to the earth through what we have been trained to call gravity. I have noticed that by bringing my attention to the experience my weight and my contact with the earth I can become aware of the deep and powerful pulse of the earth. I teach this to others and they too find that as they ground their excess mental and emotional energy in to the earth a profound sense of
relaxation, peace, and well-being can spontaneously arise and develop. I believe this is a gift which Mother Earth is always giving. We only need to open to her and receive it with thanks and it will expand.

Intuition into what is necessary for creating a secure and nurturing environment for learning, and intuition into the subtle forces working within a child that bring forth growth and development have long been regarded as a mother’s intuition. However, a mother’s love and caring for her children and her acute awareness of their needs does not have to be limited to literal mothers of literal children. We all are part of the greater mother, the earth, and we can all draw upon her wisdom in our work with others. If we learn how to open to her I believe the earth can become the teacher of teachers.
CHAPTER 11 NOTES

1 Fragment of a Zulu Myth as retold by Laura Simms (1994).

2 Gimbutas (1991) makes an important distinction between 'matrilineal' and 'matriarchy.' She says that the traditional notion of civilization as defined by the predominantly male archaeologists and historians as implying 'hierarchical political and religious organization, warfare, a class stratification and a complex division of labor' is a pattern of what she calls 'androcratic (male dominated) societies such as Indo-European but does not apply to gynocentric (mother/women-centered) cultures.' She says of these gynocentric cultures, surviving in Europe from 6500 to 3500 B.C.E. and lasting in Crete up until 1450 B.C.E., that they represent 'a long period of uninterrupted peaceful living which produced artistic expressions of graceful beauty and refinement, demonstrating a higher quality of life than many andocratic classed societies' (p. viii). Furthermore, she explains: 'The religion of the Goddess reflected a matrismic, matrilineal, and endogamic social order for most of early human history. This was not necessarily "matriarchy" which wrongly implies a mirror image of androcracy (male dominated societies)... The emphasis in these cultures (gynocentric) was on technology that nourished people's lives, in contrast to the andocratic focus on domination' (p. xi). Perhaps when Freud suggested that there is a yearning to re-enter the womb, what he was really intuiting was a yearning for this peaceful and artful gynocentric culture. What contrast between it and his vision of prehistoric bands headed by paranoid fathers hoarding their women and waiting to be murdered by their incestuously-driven sons.

3 'The primordial deity for our paleolithic and neolithic ancestors was female, reflecting the sovereignty of motherhood. In fact there are no images that have been found of a father god throughout the prehistoric record. Paleolithic and neolithic symbols and images cluster around a self-generating goddess and her basic functions as Giver-of-life, Wielder-of-death, and as Regeneratrix. This symbolic system represents cyclical, non-linear, mythical time' (Gimbutas, 1991, p. xi).

4 Gimbutas (1991) tells us that many 'Slavic people believed well into the 20th century that to strike or spit on the earth brings her to tears' (p. 228), which helps us to realize her profound sensitivity, despite her size, and the level of allergic reactions she is bound to manifest soon in response to the vile and noxious substances we have poured over her. Likewise, we can imagine that we may soon be subject to her great heaving sobs (earthquakes) resulting from her emotional and spiritual heartache due to the hundreds of years of blatant disrespect we have shown her in our thoughts, speech and deeds. A Chippewa medicine man has gathered together Native American prophecies revealing upcoming changes in the earth system; see Bear and Wind (1992).

5 Quoted in Eliade (1958), p. 239.

Chapter 12
Fire

• Telling stories around the fire • Drawing down the sun • Pyramids and sun cults • Zoroastrian temple fires • White-robed vestals • Elijah’s chariot of fire • Agni, Mercury and Hermese fire messengers • Circumambulate the cooking fire • The creative paradox of Prometheus • Regulating your fire: not too hot, not too cool • Alchemical fire liberates the inner essences and spirits • Blazing fingers, inner fire and mystic heat •

* * * * * * * * * * *

Staring into a fire at night with the darkness all around, in the same way our ancestors have done for some 500,000 years or more, we are attracted by the light and warmth, and we become entranced by the flickering language of the flames, which evoke a rich variety of imagery, in an always-changing dance. Perhaps it was this language of the fire which first inspired our ancient ancestors to speak of things beyond the functional, to tell their stories or share some human intimacies with the other faces glowing in the fire light. To the extent that there was any romance in human procreation in those times, we can imagine that it might have had its origins in the soft orange glow around the dancing flames. We can also imagine that the ancients were entranced by the tiny points of fire in the night sky and by the language of their movement in a circle dance (see Miller, 1986). Then there is the sun, that great ball of fire, which upon arising pales the light of all other fires.

The awareness that life itself was dependent on the sun dates from time immemorial, and a magical correspondence between fire and the sun has long been established (Edsman, 1987). The revelry and ritual of the summer solstice, when the sun reaches its apex to begin a slow decline toward the increased darkness and cold of winter, included the burning of great bonfires all night to encourage the solar deity to return.

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Gods of fire were born of lightning and from the sun (Edsman, 1987). They were also born from wood, similar to the various Greek heroes and demigods born from tree maidens impregnated by Zeus (lightning) or Apollo (sun). A pair of fire sticks rubbed together to light a sacred altar fire were sometimes called the parents of the fire god. Altar fires were also started by using a circular lens to focus sunlight on dry tinder, a technique known as 'drawing down the sun' or 'fire from heaven' (Walker, 1988, pp. 15, 340).

In ancient Mesopotamia early myths depict the sun as a goddess, such as Estan of the Hittites, later being revised into the male god Istanu. Hepat or Hebat a was a goddess queen of heaven and earth, whose consort was the sun god. She later passed into biblical tradition as Hebe, Eveh or Eve. In Norse myths, the sun remained a goddess known as 'Glory-of-Elves' and in German, the noun for sun die sonne is feminine. However, as patriarchal power spread in the temporal realm, it also appropriated the sun, referring to him as a god. The Biblical god is said to be assimilated by an older male sun god, Azazel or Aziz-el, 'the Strong One,' who received the scapegoat-sacrifices of the early Hebrews (Walker, 1988, p. 15).

The Greek word pyramid meant a spirit, thought, symbol, or idea of fire, and the upward-pointing triangle seems to have been an almost universal symbol for the fire element throughout the Mediterranean, Mid-East, India and Asia. The pyramid monuments of the Egyptians, as well as those of the Aztecs in Mexico, were built in the context of the solar-dominated religions and sun cults of the imperial and privileged classes.¹

The ancient nomadic peoples of Iran said prayers and made ritual fire offerings² to their fire god Atar three times a day – at dawn, at noon, and at dusk. Offerings were made of clean dry fuel, incense or dried herbs, and fragrant woods, and whenever there was meat to cook and eat, an offering of animal fat was made, which would blaze up, proclaiming new found strength. In the creation myth of the ancient Iranian people, the gods created fire on the seventh day. There were two aspects to this fire, the visible fire of
various forms and the unseen fire, or vital force (like the cosmic fire of Heraclitus), which pervades the whole of animate creation.\textsuperscript{3}

Bringing fire into the temples seems to have been associated with the patriarchal culture counteracting the powerful Near Eastern cults of the Mother Goddess. In the Zoroastrian tradition of Zarathustra, fire offerings at the sacred hearth also played a central rôle in proclaiming and maintaining rulership as the dynastic fire of each new king was kindled anew and maintained throughout the dynasty. Edsman (1987) explains that in the doctrine of Zarathustra, one of the seven holy immortals (Amesha Spentas) an archetypal personification for the principles of truth and righteousness (Asha Vahishta) was designated as the protector of fire. Sacred offering hearths, as well as profane hearths for cooking, were symbols of righteousness. As such, fires were to be kept clean and were not to be used for burning rubbish. Sacred and eternal fires burned in every Zoroastrian temple, both great and small, and the fires for the lesser sanctuaries, known as the ‘fire of fires,’ were lit from the ‘fire of Verethragna’ burning in the greater temples associated with the deity of victory.

Similar offerings were made in ancient Greece to the goddess Hestia and later in Rome to Vesta. The city hall of the Greek city states contained a prutaneion in which burned the public fire. It was never allowed to expire. Likewise, in Rome there was a special round temple dedicated to the goddess Vesta near the Forum, where the continuous fires were tended by the white-robed Vestals. Whereas Roman emperors continued to identify themselves with the celestial grandeur of the sun,\textsuperscript{4} it seems that women were relegated to a lower rôle as protectresses of earthly fire, perhaps as a way to keep them occupied with lower-level matters and out of the affairs of state. At any rate, this persisted in the European tradition, as it became a woman’s work to tend the fires of home and hearth, evoking principles of light, warmth and cooking. Scandinavian folk traditions practiced in the home maintain traces of these ancient principles of offering bits of food and drink to a female fire deity.
Ancient Hebrew temples also had an altar where a fire continuously burned, and even today the 'eternal light' or 'continually wakeful lamp' as a symbols of God’s presence in synagogues and churches is a version of this perpetual fire. Throughout the Old Testament, fire is used as a sign of God’s actions and presence, a visual manifestation of His divine glory (Edsman, 1987).

The glory of the Lord looked to the Israelites as a devouring fire.

(Ex. 24:17)

by night Yahveh guided them as a pillar of fire

(Ex. 13:21f.)

and the angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in the flame of a burning bush

(Ex. 3:2)

The fire of the Lord consumed the offering

(1 Kgs. 18:38)

Yahveh makes flames of fire his servants

(Ps. 104:4)

Elijah is carried up to heaven in a chariot of fire drawn by horses of fire

(2 Kgs. 2:11)

In all these passages, fire is a medium that delivers the divine presence from the realm of the invisible into the visible realms of human experience or vice versa, as in the case of fire offerings which are transformed from their mundane existence as visible objects in the human realm into divine substances suitable to be consumed by God.

Perhaps the most well developed and persistent of the ancient fire gods is Agni, god of fire in the ancient Rgvedas, and still active in Hindu and traditional Indian culture today. Findly (1987a) notes that other thanIndra, Agni is invoked more than any other god in the 1,028 hymns of the Rgveda. In anthropomorphic form, Agni takes on many of
the characteristics and qualities of fire. He is brilliant, golden, shining with flaming hair, pointed beard and chin, sharp flashing teeth, three or seven tongues. He carries a smoke banner, makes crackling noises and leaves a trail of blackened charcoal behind him. He also has wings like an eagle to fly into heaven. Agni is old yet eternally youthful, fertile and life-giving.

He has a voracious appetite, devouring whatever comes in his way, but he is especially fond of ghee (clarified butter) and is therefore also known as butter-backed and butter-faced within the ritual hearth, where substances are offered to him. His epithet *Kravyad* ('flesh-eating one') refers to his important function, as cremation fire, of transforming the deceased. Upon the funeral pyre the body is destroyed, purified and reconstituted; just as in the Western image of the phoenix rising from the flames and ashes, the earthly self is annihilated, while the purified fire element of the celestial being or spirit is set free.

Agni's special function is to reside within the sacred hearth to transform the earthly sacrifices and offerings into divine and subtle substances, suitable for consumption and enjoyment by the gods. In this way, he is seen, like Mercury and Hermes, as a messenger of the gods who transports the offerings to the gods and returns their blessings to the faithful. As an intermediary between earthly petitioners and their heavenly benefactors, he is also known as *Kavi*, the preeminent seer, a divine counterpart of holy teachers, mystic saints, and prophets who communicate with skillful and poetic language their visions of the cosmic mysteries. This function of the subtle fire element as a vehicle or medium for communication and artistic expression will be developed and expanded in the chapter on the wisdom energy of fire.

Aside from these associations to the divine, Agni also has a more humble function in the cooking fire and domestic hearth. In the Indian secular tradition, or domestic *grhya* liturgy, marriage is performed by circumambulating the fire seven times, and the central image of the cooking fire as an agent of transformation brings the couple from cool celibacy to the heat of sexuality, properly restrained by the protocol of married life.
In the well-known Greek myth, Prometheus, who steals fire from the gods to bestow its wonders to mortals, is chained to a mountain in the Caucasus by Zeus, and submitted to the perpetual torture of having his liver ravaged by vultures in the day, only to have it heal at night, to be re-eaten the next day. Prometheus means 'forethought,' which presumably implies that Prometheus is, in Jungian or twentieth-century language, an anthropomorphic archetype of the mind's ability to imagine the future and plan for it. Rollo May (1953) proclaims that Prometheus is the symbol of creativity and that:

Prometheus's torture represents the inner conflict which comes with creativity — it symbolizes the anxiety and guilt to which — as creative figures like Michelangelo, Thomas Mann, Dostoevsky and countless others have told us — the man who dares to bring mankind new forms of life is subject. (p. 184)

May (1953) questions why the gods oppose our creative strivings and punish us for them. On the one hand, he admits that the punishment is for the sin of false pride, hubris or the arrogance of attempting to overreach our natural human limitations. On the other hand, he asserts that the mythic struggle represents:

the age old conflict between entrenched authority, as represented by the jealous gods, and the upsurging of new life and creativity. The emergence of new vitality always to some extent breaks the existing customs and beliefs, and is thus threatening and anxiety provoking to those in power as well as to the growing person himself. (p. 186)

Inherent dilemmas engaged in the emotional processes of learning and creativity are thus forged into the story of Prometheus. A humble respect for the vast wisdom of tradition and one's inherent limitations must be brought together with the courage to steel the fire in an existential struggle to proclaim and manifest the wisdom of one's own gods within. From a rational perspective, these two can seem antithetical or difficult for the mind to simultaneously maintain; however, it is just such transcendence of paradox that gnostic literature, mystical teachings and non-dual contemplative practice encourage us to achieve. The mental state which can unify opposites and keep them discrete simultaneously is part of
Wilber's notion of vision-logic and of the teachings of the Tibetan mandala system of elemental wisdoms. It is this inner struggle and inner path which I wish to introduce to teachers in their training so that they, too, can find their own fire of wisdom burning within and thereby rely much less upon reheating insights of psychologists and educational theorists.

The inner turmoil and conflict that goes with the psychological process of genuine creative effort is like the burning away of impurities in the alembic vessel of alchemical procedures to formulate the philosopher's stone and transmute base metals into gold. Both Jung (1968b, 1970) and Eliade have explained the ways in which they understand alchemy, at its best, to be a spiritually transforming discipline in which alchemists projected psychic qualities and processes from within onto the physical substances and procedures that they manipulated in their alchemical laboratories. Thus, the outward procedures constituted a highly symbolic ritual designed to achieve a psychological and spiritual transmutation, and the work of turning base metals like lead into gold was, for the most part, symbolic of an inner transmutation of base emotional energies into the brilliant wisdom and bliss of spiritual gold.

The consistent regulation of the fire's temperature over long periods was said to be the most difficult aspect of the alchemical process. If the fire under the alembic was too cool, the procedures would fail to accomplish the transmutation, and if too hot, a disastrous explosion could result. Maintaining a perfect balance of the fire element for months and even for years was essential to success in the tricky business of alchemy. The symbolism of this transforming fire has obvious implications for the regulation of our inner fires of emotional and wisdom energies. If we allow our emotional fire energy within to become too hot we can explode in acting out our emotions, whereas if we let the fire go out through repression, there is no passion, no power, and no colour in our lives.

In the alchemical teachings of Paracelsus, fire was thought of as 'the great awakener.' Fire liberates the essences and inner spirits which lie dormant within matter.
Fire purifies, burning away the terrestrial husk of matter to reveal and awaken the sleeping spirit hidden within. It serves this function not just because it is hot, but primarily because fire is itself a ubiquitous embodiment of spirit in nature. Through the proper use of manifest fire the vital fire of spirit is revealed. This understanding of vital fire is again reminiscent of the primal fire of Heraclitus:

For fire all things are exchanged, and fire for all things, as for gold goods and for goods gold.

(fr. 90) (Hussey, 1972, p. 51)

The mystic light of the early Christian hermits or desert fathers of Egypt was also frequently likened to fire. Eliade (1962) tells us that Abba Joseph claimed that one cannot be a monk without becoming like a flaming fire and recounts how this same desert father's fingers became like two flames of fire while raising his hands toward heaven. ‘Then turning to one of the monks, he said: “If you wish you may become entirely like fire!”’ Another story tells of how one of the brothers came to visit Abba Arsenius and saw him through the window of his cell, ‘like a fire’ (pp. 60-61).

Eliade (1962) also quotes from the Life of Simeon, written by Nicetas Stethatos, telling of the mystical experience of Simeon the New Theologian:

One night when he was at prayer and his purified mind was joined with the primal Mind, he saw a light in the sky which suddenly threw its beams down on him, a great and pure light which illuminated all things and cast a splendour as bright as day. It illuminated him also, and he felt as if the whole building with the cell in which he was had vanished and passed in the wink of an eye into nothingness, that he himself had been snatched into the air and had entirely forgotten his body. (p.63)

On another occasion:

a light like the dawn began to shine from above.... As this light continued to shine with ever increasing brightness ... he saw that he was himself at the centre of the light and that the sweetness invading his whole body from so near filled him with joy and tears. He saw the
light unbelievably uniting with his flesh and gradually pervading his limbs. He saw this light finally invading his body, his heart and his bowels, the whole light invading his whole body and turning him completely to fire and light... (pp. 63-64)

This kind of fire and light, like the burning bush of Moses, may in fact have more in common with the shimmering heavenly ether of Aristotle than the subtle element of fire. Spiritual light is nonetheless associated with the imagery of fire, and it is interesting to note how this passage from an Orthodox Christian mystical biography, has a surprisingly Buddhist flavour with terms like ‘primal Mind’ and ‘nothingness’.

The Tibetan Buddhist tradition also has teachings regarding a spiritually transforming experience of inner fire and mystic heat, known as *gtum-mo* (pronounced tumo or du-mo). This is a subtle and complex meditation yoga involving intensive discipline of both body and mind in a synchronized integration. It is usually only practiced by highly trained and adept yogis and yoginis within the context of long retreats, such as the traditional Tibetan retreat of three years, three months, and three days. In this practice the inner fire is concentrated and cultivated to burn away all obstacles to the attainment of enlightenment.

Fire, as we have seen, is an element of transformation and serves as an intermediary agent between the world of human suffering and the possibilities of awakening into brilliant and blazing wisdom. In the Tibetan system, it also involves a refinement of perceptual discrimination, artistic disciplines and issues of relationship, communication and compassion. Teachers who learn to work with the subtle fire element within their personal and classroom systems might be more able to discover and encourage the divine fire within their students to blaze forth in the form of curiosity, caring and excited intelligence.
CHAPTER 12 NOTES

1 Eliade (1958) tells us gods and goddesses of the sun represent an energetic, active or dynamic aspect of the Supreme Being, whose more passive aspect is represented in gods and goddesses of the sky (a process which Eliade refers to as 'Solarization' of the Supreme Beings' (p. 126). He also points out that earthly sovereigns were quick to identify themselves with the power of the sun, setting up a connection that he has noticed between religions of the sun and what he calls 'historic destinies' of imperialist and militaristic empires that set out to conquer other nations.

2 The use of sacred hearths as a transformative stage or altar for making offerings to various gods can be traced back to the Vedic nomads who came from inner Asia to the Indian subcontinent around 1500 B.C.E., bringing with them the Indo-European language and culture, which spread both east and west. The Altaic peoples in Siberia, considered to be another branch descended from these same Vedic nomads, still invoke prayers today to the 'spirit,' 'virgin' or 'mother' of fire and make offerings to her within a sacred hearth (see Edsman 1987; Boyce, 1979; Duchesne-Guillemin, 1962, 1963).


4 Walker 1988 tells us that even the likes of Constantine I, the first Christian Emperor of Rome, imprinted an image of the sun on his coins, dedicated to 'the invincible sun, my guardian.' (p. 15)

5 The Indo-European root of the Sanskrit word agni ('fire') is related to the Latin ignis and the Lithuanian ugnis. It also shares a cognate with Ak/gnis an ancient Hittite god of annihilation. The myths and rituals of Agni can be detected throughout Asia, the Mideast and Europe and are reflected in Old Irish, Roman and Iranian sources. See Findly (1987a) also Blair (1961), Boyce (1979), Duchesne-Guillemin (1962, 1963).

6 Jung's writing on the subject of alchemy is substantial and extremely difficult for the lay reader. For a good introduction, see 'Individual Dream Symbolism in Relation to Alchemy' (1936) in The Portable Jung. A fuller study involves two volumes from The Collected Works, Vol. 12, Psychology and Alchemy (1968b) and Vol. 13, Alchemical Studies (1970).

7 The teachings describing how to perform the practice are part of a cannon known as The Six Yogas of Naropa, as they were first transmitted to a Tibetan (Marpa the Translator) by the great Indian Mahasiddha Naropa. Being an acetic and esoteric yogic practice, it is, like alchemy, difficult for the layman to understand. Though the practice has to do also with wind and breath, which are discussed more thoroughly in the next chapter, it seems appropriate to include this outline teaching on the practice of gtum-mo to further evoke the sacred meaning of fire.

'The modes of experiencing the mystic heat as the path are: (a) The meaning of the word gtum-mo. The syllable gtum ('fierce') signifies the direct overcoming of all that is not conducive to enlightenment, that is, all that has to be given up; the syllable mo ('mother') indicates motherhood as producing spontaneously all the good in virtues, that is, all that has to be attained. (b) Its actuality is the awareness of eternal delight and nothingness that has come about by the spreading of a self-kindled glow. (c) Differentiation is into an external, internal, mystic, and ultimate heat. (d) Its comparability is that the external one is like fire, the internal one like a medicinal drug, the mystic one like a lion, and the ultimate one like a mirror. (e) Its function is as follows. The external one overcomes the 80,000 obstacles and produces a feeling of warmth in the sentient organism. The internal one makes the eighty-four diseases subside and produces a sense of delight. The mystic one conquers the 84,000 instinctive forces and produces the awareness of eternal delight and nothingness in the sentient organism' (Guenther, 1963, p. 59).
Chapter 13

Air

• From the top of the sky to the bottom of my lungs • Spiritus • A vital wind divides Father Heaven from Mother Earth • God’s wind spirit blows inside us • Lightning bolts of vital energy impregnate Mother Earth • Air as sentient and intelligent, even omniscient • Plato divides body breath from spirit breath • In the Quran angels are a breath of fresh air • Hold your horses, or your chariot will wobble • Your mind rides a horse of wind through channels in your body like roads in a city • Guenther’s cybernetic metaphor • Information input organizes the organism’s evolution moving (wind) along development lines of its own making. • Wind in mind makes things happen •

* * * * * * * * * * *

Air is invisible, yet it sustains life. At birth, we take our first breath, and at death we expire our last. The intimacy of drawing life-giving air into our bodies in the constantly repeated cycle of breathing, joined with a sense of the pervasiveness of air, from the surface of the earth and waters to the vastness of the sky, forms a powerful image of divinity, both immanent and transcendent.

Air, and breath in particular, have been associated with notions of eternal life, vital energy, soul and spirit, in a great many religious and cultural traditions around the world. Egyptian Ka, Hebrew nefesh and ruah, Greek psuche and pneuma, Latin anima and spiritus, Sanskrit prana, Tibetan rlung, Chinese shen, hun, and shen qi, Polynesian mana, and orenda of the Iroquois, all represent various conceptions of a subtle air element, breath, or wind as synonymous with ideas of spirit, soul, universal vitality and mental energy (Findly, 1987b).

A myth common to many ancient cultures involves the energy and movement of wind, personified as an air god, forcing a separation between Father Heaven and Mother
Earth, bound together in a primordial embrace of formless unity. Findly (1987b) tells us that in ancient India and Persia, the air element was personified as the god Vayu, while in Mesopotamia this god of wind and storms was known as Enlil. Enlil also had a female counterpart known as the goddess Ninlil (lady wind). The energy and power of their active presence between heaven and earth brought varying weather of the seasons and could be breathed in by human beings and animals, giving them vitality. In the spring Enlil was responsible for softening the hard, crusty soil of winter with the power of his warm and moist winds. Thus, he was a generative wind whose penetration of Mother Earth caused things to grow. Enlil was also recognized as god of the hoe, as his presence could be invoked to empower this humble tool with the same earth penetrating and generative force.

In Hebrew, *ruah* (and a similar but less frequently used term *neshamah*), refer to breath, wind, and spirit. As a concept of nature, *ruah* includes the winds of the four directions and the spirit of God, or the wind of heaven, as well as principles associated with human breath, such as words, emotions, mental activity, moral character and life itself. God’s wind-spirit (*ruah elohim* of *Genesis* 1:2., quoted above in ‘Water’) seems to have a similar cosmogenic function of separating out the various dichotomous components of creation. Furthermore, it is the breath of God which animates the earthly flesh:

> And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

*Genesis* 2:7

The Hebrew term for the individual soul *nefesh* is also thought to be derived from a root verb meaning ‘to breathe.’ God’s spirit, *ruah*, is also evident in the Bible in the breath and words of prophecy, and in the revelation of divine wisdom through situations of supreme authority, as well as in ecstatic states of frenzy and possession (Findly, 1987b).

Zeus, king of gods for the Greeks and Jupiter for the Romans, both archetypes of the patriarchal head of family like the Norse god Thor, Celtic Taranis, Slavic Perun, and
the Vedic Indra were all sky gods who personified the air as well as the power of lightning and thunder. Eliade (1958) tells us that they were responsible for storms, winds and weather of all kinds. In agricultural communities, lightning, thunder and rain, like the wind, became masculine principles of fertility impregnating Mother Earth at a time when patriarchal war-like gods were beginning to dominate and gradually replace the once powerful goddess cults. Life-giving in a different sense from the nurturing earth mother goddesses, these warrior gods wielding their thunderbolts were personifications of vital energy and were also conceived as powerful breathing spirits who could animate matter. An association between the Warrior archetype and the subtle element of air and wind still survives as we shall explore in the Chapter concerning the wisdom energy of air.

The Greek term for the notion of a world soul made up of air, *atmos*, is derived from a Sanskrit word for breath, *atmen*, related to *atman*, the Hindu term used to refer to the soul (Walker, 1988). To the pre-Socratic philosophers, who in general conceived of the entire cosmos to be something like a living organism, soul, air, wind, and breath were all very much interrelated. Diogenes of Apollonia, for example, conceived of air as sentient and intelligent, like a mind or a guiding principle that controlled living beings. Since Zeus was the god of sky and air as well as supreme god, the pervasiveness of air, for Diogenes, also explained his omniscience:

> that which has intelligence is what men call air ... it has power over all things ... in all cities, in every home, in every one of you. There is no place where is not air. And he who is present everywhere, because he is everywhere of necessity knows everything. (Guthrie, 1955, pp. 136, 142)

Findly (1987) tells us that when Homer uses *psuche*, the breath of life, he refers to an airy soul that departs at the time of death. Similar to the *Ka* (breath-soul) of the Egyptians, Homer's *psuche* was a kind of shadow or airy double living within the corporal body. Plato’s *psuche*, on the other hand, although still vaguely related to breath, became a
bit more abstract as the seat of rational intelligence and moral choice, a comprehensive personal soul conceived as entirely separate from the body.

Likewise, in the Greek Bible, the Hebrew nefesh closely associated with breath was translated as psuche, and the concept evolved to mean the immortal principle, more as in Plato, a soul separate from actual breath present in the mortal body. Gradually the soul in the West lost its essential immanence in the breath.

The term pneuma, used in the New Testament to refer to the Holy Spirit, the spirit of an individual person, and the spirits of demons who cause insanity, also lost with common usage its connection to the physical experience of breath, though its original meaning was similar to the Hebrew ruah (breath). These separations of the divine spirit from the corporal experience of breathing is another example of a distinct separation of sacred and profane in the Western conception, by now a familiar refrain. Trust in the elemental air wisdom experienced in the body as actual breath seems to have been for the most part lost or forgotten in the West due to this kind of dualistic thinking.

In classical Islamic philosophy, breath, ruh, derived from the similar Hebrew term, is a vital link between the spiritual and its embodiment as a physical being. Beginning as a divine emanation, breath functions to purify and perfect each physical form. In pre-Qur'anic poetry, ruh also is used to refer to an angel (Findly, 1987b).

Prana, the Sanskrit term, also has a broad meaning that encompasses breath, air, wind, energy, life, vitality, and strength. It was with the breath of his mouth that the original god of the Vedas, Prajapati, created all the other gods, while with the prana of his lower body, he gave birth to demons. Perhaps this image of the life giving breath of Prajapati was partly responsible for inspiring the yogic practice of breath control or breath retention known as pranayama.

From very early on in the Indian tradition, it was observed that breath and mind were related to one another, such that the arousal or quieting of one was known to affect the other. In the classical Indian image, the mind is likened to a chariot pulled by two
powerful horses, the one being prana or breath and the other being desire. The chariot
tends to go in the direction of the more powerful animal. If desires take control, breath and
mind become irregular and chaotic; if breath prevails, desires are controlled. Various forms
of breath control were practiced in all the major traditions already mentioned. Most of these
seem to have their roots in the Indian yogic practices of pranayama.\textsuperscript{2}

Feuerstein (1989) tells us that pranayama or breath control was probably invented
by the mysterious Vratya peoples, members of the earliest wave of Vedic nomads. The
Vratyas, in small clans consisting of exactly thirty-three members, wandered northeastern
India (modern Bihar) with their belongings in primitive horse carts that doubled as altars
for their magic rituals. Regarded as outcasts, and even as sacrificial victims, by their
orthodox cousins who practiced the mainstream Vedic sacrificial religion, they were
connected with the warrior (Kshatriya) state, and a primary god in their magical rites was
Vayu, the god of wind and ecstatic flight. The wise elders of these Vratya bands practiced
ascetic breathing and were said to possess magical powers (sidhi) due to their abilities to
concentrate their minds and to develop yogic control of their bodily energies.

In both Hindu and Buddhist yoga, mind is said to ride on the wind of prana:

In the teaching of Buddha, the breath, or prana in Sanskrit, is said to
be “the vehicle of the mind,” because it is the prana that makes our
mind move. So when you calm the mind by working skillfully with
the breath, you are simultaneously and automatically taming and
training the mind. (Sogyal, 1992, p. 68)

The Tibetan Buddhist conception of the body as a psychophysical system is
described as a dynamic network of subtle channels similar to the meridians known in
Chinese acupuncture where the chi energy is said to flow. These channels are known as
nadi in Sanskrit and as rtsa in Tibetan. The essence of mind or bindu in Sanskrit and thig-le
in Tibetan is said to move along these channels, propelled by the force or energy of the
wind element, prana, (rlung in Tibetan). Sogyal (1992) tells us that “the human body is
compared by the masters to a city, the channels to its roads, the winds to a horse, and the
mind to a rider' (p. 248). Guenther (1989) gives this more complex psychological explication:

\textit{rtsa, rlung, thig-le}. These terms pertain to dynamic patterns in the body-image. Contrary to widely held beliefs, the indigenous texts make it abundantly clear that they have nothing to do with the physical aspect of one's body except by some misplaced concreteness. The body-image sums up the embodying process: the information input (thig-le) organizes (bkod-pa) the organism's evolution and in this sense moves (rlung) along the development lines (rtsa) of its own making. (p. 258, note 54)

Guenther (1989) also explains the connection between breath and mind in this way:

Breathing as a process of a living body is said to be the carrier of the mind. It is tempting to speak of the body as the "hardware" and of the mind with its multiple organizational dynamics as the "software"; but this analogy, in spite of a certain accuracy, should not be carried too far. The more important point to note is that mind is immanent in the system by virtue of being spread out over and carried about and around in the interconnected and interactional field components of the system. As such it presents the organizing principle in its complementarity to the conservative principle, which is exemplified by the body. (pp. 79-80)

Tibetan Buddhist texts such as \textit{The Tibetan Book of the Dead} often associate wind with \textit{karma} (action) in phrases like the 'winds of karma' because any manifest action in the physical world begins as a movement of mind. Wind is, therefore, that element that makes things happen. The movement of wind synchronizes mind with body so that thoughts can lead to meaningful action. Contemplative training that could facilitate an awareness of the movement of wind and the synchronization of body and mind would clearly help teachers in their work with energetic young people.

Mind essence,\textsuperscript{3} which rides on the winds like a rider on a horse, is associated with the element of space, which is primordial emptiness or an openness to all possibilities. This mind essence of open space is not described as inert, but as vibrant and luminous. In the West, a similar yet perhaps less developed or less integrated notion has been called ether.
CHAPTER 13 NOTES

1 Quoted in Walker (1988, p.335).

2 The origin of ascetic and yogic breath control seems to date back to a period somewhere between the second and first millenniums B.C.E. There is some question among scholars of Indian history as to whether the origins of yoga are to be located in the ancient Indus civilization (c. 2500-1800 B.C.E.) or in the traditions of the Vedic Aryans who invaded India from the steppes of central Euro-Asia (c. 1800-1300). Most likely there were elements existing in both ancient cultures and the flowering of Vedic literature and ascetic practice was due, in part, to the increased vitality of this cross-cultural fertilization. See Feuerstein (1989), chapter 4, 'Yoga In Ancient Times.'

3 *Bindu* in Sanskrit, *thig-le* in Tibetan, is a kind of concentrated point of mind said to be mind's nourishment.
Chapter 14
Ether

• An air of the gods? • No object of sense, but a mere work of imagination
• Quinta Essentia • Sparkling star stuff beyond the air bowl • ‘One thing,’ said Parmenides • Plato’s craftsman uses elemental templates • Aristotle’s circles above, circles below, but never the twain shall meet • Philo’s non-spatial cycles of the mind, star-like and dazzling • Stoic ether and pneuma became one active principle of nature that flowed through all things • Light waves of what? • Einstein gives ether an OK but takes out the motion • Bohm’s holomovement: an implicate sea of energy inseparable from matter • We unfold our own order • Its essence is empty and its nature is luminous • It is the glow of the lamp of self-luminous mind

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

Staring into the heavens, the ancients noticed the circular dance of the stars punctuated by the fixed stars or planets that had their own peculiar migratory patterns. What moves the stars, and what is the mysterious force of attraction and repulsion apparent in magnets? What fills the space beyond the sky? Is there a more refined air, a higher air, substanceless yet possessed of vitality, shining, brilliant, and even blazing like fire, a celestial air, an air of heaven, an air of the gods? Is it possible that the gods and goddesses themselves are made of this rare celestial air, as well as all spirits and the souls of men and women? Is there a principle which is all-pervasive? Is there a fifth element beyond earth, water, fire, and air? How does gravity work? What is light? And how is it that light can pass through a vacuum? How does electricity work? What is the medium of electromagnetic waves? These are some of the questions asked at various times throughout history which have given rise to myriad theories concerning ether, also known as aither and aether.

Aether, being no object of our sense, but the mere work of imagination, brought only on the stage for the sake of hypothesis, or to solve some phenomenon, real or imaginary; authors take the liberty
to modify it as they please'. We have ethers continuous and
discontinuous, material and immaterial, subject to and free from the
laws of ordinary mechanics; ethers filling the heavens, pervading the
atmosphere, penetrating hard bodies; ‘ethers cluttered by a great
variety of concepts’. They elude classification by the historian almost
as effectively as they have escaped detection by the physicist.¹

The fifth element, or *quinta essentia* (Latin: fifth essence), is altogether different
from the other four elements in that it has no corresponding physical manifestation that
might give us at least a symbolic representation as a handle to understand its qualities.

In Homeric Greece, the sky was conceived of as a solid hemisphere, like an
inverted bowl, or a canopy that covered a round, flat earth. Air filled the space between the
earth and this dome of sky, while beyond the dome was ether, luminous and sparkling,
brilliant like the stars themselves. It seems to have been a principle combining properties of
air and fire and was also related with light, energy, the vitality of life, celestial movements,
and all things spiritual and god-like.

Though Annaximenes conceived of the *prima materia* as air, and Heraclitus
proclaimed that all things were ultimately of fire, an actual theory of ether as an element
itself, aside from the other four, is not found in the pre-Socratics. However, the powerful
notion put forth by the pre-Socratic thinker Parmenides of Elea in Italy, that a single,
undifferentiated, unchanging, essential being existed behind all appearances, must have
provoked conjecture that seems to have led to the ether of Aristotle.

After Parmenides, philosophers who agreed with this supposition, yet who also
wanted to maintain the conventional cosmogony of the four elements as an underlying
source of manifest diversity, had to wrestle with the problem of how diversity arises from
unity. What is the link? This has been described as the Parmenidean impasse.² Plato dealt
with this by positing his theory of eternal, transcendent forms. In the *Timaeus*, Plato
explains that the cosmogenical Craftsman uses the elemental forms as recipes in his work to
differentiate space and order motion. For Plato, ether was simply the purest form of air
located between the misty sublunary atmosphere and the regions of celestial fire. For his student, on the other hand, Aristotle's ether became an element in its own right, a 'wonderful divine essence,' as he took a different approach to the Parmenidean impasse by not separating eternal forms from the things formed in his conception of a cosmos, but did separate ether from the other four elements.

For Aristotle, *aither* as the 'first body' has no nature or quality of its own but is only capable of local motion, circular motion in particular. Aristotle used *aither* as an explanation for the circular motion of the stars. The other four elements in his system moved up and down, always in straight lines towards the centre of his spherical cosmos or towards the periphery. Furthermore, *aither* was the prime mover. Aither moving against fire ignites it to give off heat and light. In the case of the sun, it is the movement of *aither* that brings about the seasonal changes in the sun's heat and light. Aristotle also conceived of breath, *pneuma*, the principle of vitality and animation in plants and animals on earth, as a representation or analogue of the eternally circling celestial *aither* above. In this way, the cycles of earthly existence of the seasons and in the life cycles of all living things were seen as reflections or emulations of the celestial aither evident in the circle dance of the stars.³

As Miller (1986) tells us, 'A mixture of Platonic and Aristotelian ether seems to have pervaded Philo's upper atmosphere, for in his buoyant description of the dance of the human mind through the “World of becoming” he located the ethereal zone beyond the cloudy reaches of the air but did not clearly distinguish its properties from those of air or its motions from those of celestial fire' (p. 62). Philo, a Jewish philosopher of Alexandria in Egypt, living around the same time as Christ, fused Jewish theological insights with Platonic and Aristotelian cosmogeny. Recalling from Plato's *Timaeus* how the Craftsman formed mind as a reproduction of the geometry of celestial circles, Philo understood the journey toward wisdom and virtue as a process of coming to know the natural cycles of the mind and learning to let them be as they are, which in his view was what God had intended.
The soul of the sage was to be a heaven on earth, having within it, as
the ether has, pure natures, ordered motions, harmonious choral
dances [choreias emmeleis], divine revolutions, most star like and
dazzling rays of virtues. (Miller, 1986, p. 62)

Philo’s philosophy, like Plato’s, finds a correspondence between celestial cycles
and the cycles inherent to the learning developmental process in the human mind and seem
to me to come close to the Buddhist ideas that I am presenting. Furthermore the degree to
which Philo respects this correspondence seems to integrate the celestial ether with the life
of the mind in a way that seems to me similar to the Tibetan Buddhist conception of space.
Aristotle’s ether, physically separate from the other four elements, perpetuated a
philosophical separation between mind and matter similar to the way in which the Hebrew
god was kept separate from his creation. If there is an idea in particular which I wish to
introduce into the philosophy of education and teacher training, it would be this concept of
space as the ultimate non-dual meeting ground between mind and matter.

This kind of integration was also achieved in the philosophy of the Stoics, in which
erher and pneuma became identified fully with one another. Ether was associated with the
active principle of Nature or God that was continuous throughout the universe and flowed
through all things. Ether gave coherence, cohesion or hexis to bodies. Its continual motion
created a tension, a tonos, because it moved simultaneously outward and inward. Outward
motion was said to create ‘quantities and qualities’; and inward motion, ‘unity and essence’
(Sambursky, 1959, p. 128). According to Cantor and Hodge (1981): ‘This active principle
(contained in the ether) as God or Nature, is an immanent logos, a rational providential
intelligence, the very life of the universe itself from which all plant, animal and human life
draws its diverse animation and faculties’ (p. 6).

Medieval conceptions of ether were primarily attempts to give doctrines of spirit and
heaven a physical interpretation. As Cantor and Hodge (1981) explain, medieval ether
theories were generally not based upon the Stoic integrative approach, but followed more in
line with the thinking of Plato or Aristotle. Hence, medieval theories either followed the
Theories of ether continued to proliferate throughout the scientific era, most notably in Newton's attempts to explain invisible forces such as gravity and magnetism, as well as the propagation and refraction of light, and later, in Maxwell's ethereal theories of electromagnetism and optics. Though many thought that Einstein's theories of relativity sounded a death knell for ether theories, he himself thought otherwise, as he explained in an address delivered at the University of Leyden in 1920.

More careful reflection teaches us, however, that the special theory of relativity does not compel us to deny ether. We may assume the existence of an ether; only we must give up ascribing a definite state of motion to it, i.e. we must by abstraction take from it the last mechanical characteristic which Lorentz had still left it....

According to the general theory of relativity space without ether is unthinkable; for in such space there would not only be no propagation of light, but also no possibility of existence for standards of space and time (measuring-rods and -clocks), nor therefore any space-time intervals in the physical sense. (Cantor & Hodge, 1981, pp. 53-54)

Though not described specifically as an ether theory, the implicate order and holomovement theories of quantum physicist David Bohm (1980), which describe space as an implicate sea of energy inseparable from matter, perhaps can be included here, for, as he explains, 'the holomovement is the ground of what is manifest.' Just as Heraclitus said that a cosmic fire is the ground of all, Bohm tells us that space is not empty, but alive with energy, and that our universe is like one ripple, or 'a pattern of excitation' on the surface of this cosmic sea of energy. 'This excitation pattern is relatively autonomous and gives rise to approximately recurrent, stable and separable projections into a three-dimensional explicate order of manifestation.'
Einstein’s theories told us that space and time are not separate entities but linked together as part of a greater whole, a space-time continuum, while Bohm’s theory implies that everything in the universe is part of a continuum, fundamentally inseparable. What we experience as tangible reality is an illusory display or part of a feedback loop that includes our own consciousness. Vast levels of a deeper reality lie enfolded within the implicate order hidden from our consciousness, which itself seems to determine what we experience as the explicate order that we know as manifest reality.

Bohm’s ideas combined with those of Pribram (1974, 1991) have issued in what seems to be an emerging paradigm which conceives of both the universe and the brain as operating in a way that is analogous to holography.6 Battista (1978), Pietsch (1981), Wilber (1982) and Talbot (1991) explore the meaning, merits and limitations of this ‘new paradigm’ which is used to explain the interdependence between mind and matter, in a new way that makes sense to our minds conditioned by twentieth century thought.

I find Bohm’s theory of the implicate order, and the theories of a holographic universe, to be symbols and ways of thinking that point to a possible experience of reality altogether different from the way that most of us experience it. And in this way I find it to be similar in many ways to the Tibetan Buddhist symbol of space, which is essentially a metaphor to help us understand terms like ‘mind’ and the ‘non-dual ground of consciousness.’ Since there is no need to discuss the meaning of these terms again, I would like to end this discussion on the various conceptions of celestial ether with a sacred song from the Tibetan tradition. The following excerpt is from a song describing the principles behind the meditation practices designed to achieve one of the highest stages of realization in Tibetan Buddhism, Mahamudra (the great symbol) and was composed by the accomplished nineteenth-century meditation master and teacher Jamgon Kongtrol Lodro Thaye:7

As for ground mahamudra:
There are both things as they are and the way of confusion.
It does not incline toward either samsara or
nirvana,
And is free from the extremes of exaggeration and denigration.
Not produced by causes, not changed by conditions.
It is not spoiled by confusion
Nor exalted by realization.
It does not know either confusion or liberation.

Since no existence exists anywhere,
Its expression is completely unobstructed and manifests everywhere.
Pervading all of samsara and nirvana like space,
It is the ground of all confusion and liberation,
With its self-luminous consciousness
And its alaya-vijnana.\textsuperscript{8}
As for the cognitive aspect of this neutral state,
Its essence is empty and its nature is luminous.
These two are inseparable and are the quintessence of insight.
It is space, ungraspable as a thing.
It is a spotless precious clear crystal.
It is the glow of the lamp of self-luminous mind.
It is inexpressible, the experience of the mute.
It is unobscured, transparent wisdom,
The luminous dharmakaya, sugatagarbha,\textsuperscript{9}
Primordially pure and spontaneous.
It cannot be shown through analogy by anyone,
And it cannot be expressed in words.
It is the dharmadhatu,\textsuperscript{10} which overwhelms mind's inspection.\textsuperscript{11}
CHAPTER 14 NOTES

2. The Parmenidean impasse is a theme in Barnes (1979).
6. Holography is the technique and principles behind creating three-dimensional images by recording the interference patterns between two laser beams, one which bounces off the object to be depicted and the other which does not. The three-dimensional image is reproduced when a holographic film which encodes the interference patterns is illuminated by another laser. One of the fascinating characteristics of this process is that every small fragment of the holographic film contains all of the information recorded in the whole. Pribram (1974, 1991) used this as a way of understanding how memories might be stored throughout the brain and nervous system rather than stored locally as we do with files in space. Pribram made a connection between this structure of the brain and Bohm's universal holomovement theories which has led to much further speculation. Wilber (1982) has edited a book containing several articles covering the early dialogues between some of the leading theorists. Talbot (1991) looks at using the theory to explain everything from mind-body unification to miracles.
7. Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye, along with three of his contemporaries, broke down the barriers of sectarian in-fighting in Tibet and gathered together the essences of each individual tradition in an ecumenical movement (called Rime, meaning "no boundary") which was to become a renaissance of spiritual teachings in Tibet.
8. Alaya-vijnana is the storehouse consciousness, primordial basis, or field of consciousness.
9. Dharmakaya is Buddha mind and sugatagarbha is Buddha essence or Buddha nature.
10. Dhatu means space, and dharmadhatu is a term referent to a realm or sphere of dharma, an 'all-encompassing space, unconditional totality - unoriginated and unchanging - in which all phenomena arise, dwell, and cease' (Nalanda Translation Committee, 1986, p. 220.
Chapter 15
Elemental Systems

- Distinct rhythms in the stillness • Ways to understand how mind unfolds its own reality • The I Ching has four celestial elements and four terrestrial
- Divination from a Yellow River tortoise • The ten deities of the universal creation myth • Health is a perfect balance of the elements • Ancient elemental theories traveled along trade routes • For Empedocles the driving forces that impel elements to combine or separate are love and hate, attraction and repulsion. • Hippocratic humours: phlegm, blood, bile and water • For Galen, pure blood makes for good jokes, while phlegmatics are usually melancholy • Air-spring, Fire-summer, Earth-autumn, Water-winter • Steiner says master your temperament don’t be its slave • Deeply serious melancholic • Soft focus phlegmatic • Excitable sanguine • Active choleric •

As a small boy of six immersed in the unified sea of implicate order, I began to notice how the red rock below made itself different from the air and sky above and all around with a distinct rhythm in the stillness. I also began to notice how I made myself different from the rock and air with another rhythm in the stillness. Having experienced these distinct rhythms in the stillness, I later lost my sensitivity. No one gave me a way to integrate this experience into my daily life. There was no trail of words or symbols in my culture that could guide me back and forth between this deep and simple insight and the crazy mixed-up world with too many people making demands, mindless chatter, print, and chaos. This world made very little sense.

If I had had a teacher that could have looked me in the eye and said ‘I understand,’ I might have found it easier. If I had had a teacher who could have sensed the rhythm in the stillness even in the midst of chaos, I might have learned to do it, too. It seems to me now that a teacher is someone who has learned how to navigate this crazy world, albeit in her
own way, and someone who is willing to show a confused and frightened boy how he might do it, too.

There are ways of understanding how our mind unfolds its own reality. There are teachings that have been misplaced, forgotten or set aside. Many people in the past have felt the rhythm in the stillness, and they have understood it and drawn maps and symbols that can help us to read the patterns in our own minds as they unfold realities around us.

It is not known exactly where or when these ancient quasi-scientific notions of the four elements first originated. However, the elemental basis of the eight trigrams of the Chinese I-Ching or Book of Changes, thought to be one of the oldest surviving wisdom teachings of world literature, and said to be derived from ancient prehistoric divination practices, may represent one of the earliest attempts to systematize elemental combinations.

The wisdom teachings and extensive commentary derived from the sixty-four hexagrams of the I-Ching represents a vast study which, I believe, could also prove very useful as another means to train intuitive wisdom as part of teacher education. This could be the topic for further study in this field of contemplative wisdom in education, however for our purposes what is significant is to explain that the eight trigrams (which make up the sixty-four hexagrams when coupled together in every possible combination) represent the four elements, multiplied by two.

The generation of the eight trigrams from the Supreme Ultimate (Taoist principle of the unified complements of yin and yang) enfolds a Chinese cosmological creation myth within simple binary code (see figure 10) similar to that which is the basis for today's computer languages. What results is a system of eight trigrams describing the four elements both in their transcendent or divine forms as pure essential elements, paired with a more terrestrial form of the same element, a form more commonly experienced in the day-to-day lives of human beings.
Figure 10. Supreme Ultimate as Origin of Trigrams

The eight trigrams representing the four elements can be described in this way: The transcendent essence of the air element called 'Creative Power,' Ch'ien (all yang lines) is identified with 'Heaven,' or as Walker (1986) puts it, 'the impalpable Heavenly Father or World Oversoul,' while the terrestrial air is called 'wind' or 'breath,' Sun. The essential water is simply referred to as 'Water,' K'an, while the other water element more common in daily life is called 'lake' or 'sea,' Tui. The transcendent 'Fire,' Li, is paired up with the 'thunder' (or lightening), Chen, as a form of fire that descends from the sphere of heaven and the sun fire to connect with earth. And the essence of 'Earth,' Kun, 'the mother' or the
'receptive' (all yin lines) has as its more explicit representative the form of the earth element that rises up before our eyes as a majestic 'mountain,' Ken.1

Chinese legends tell that the mythic emperor Fu Hsi (reported to have lived sometime between 2500-3000 B.C.E.), went to contemplate the meaning of life along the banks of the Yellow River, when a tortoise with distinctive markings on its shell emerged from the water. From these markings, he drew a document known as the Yellow River Map, which contains primitive markings which are said to be the source of the familiar eight hexagrams of the I-Ching.

Walker (1986) remarks that 'if the legend of Fu Hsi is as old as has been supposed, then it would place the invention of the original I-Ching in the matriarchal period.' She also says that symbol systems such as our own alphabet, early ideograms, numbers, calendars, and hieroglyphics were originated by women during the matriarchal age 'when men served chiefly as hunters, warriors, and field hands' (p. 21). Furthermore, she explains:

It is significant that Fu Hsi himself was apparently not a man, but an early god coupled with the Universal Muse, the Goddess of creation, Nu-Kua, maker of the first human beings out of clay. Like many of her counterparts (Ma Nu, Nun, Naunet, Mammu, Nammu, Anukis, Tiamat, Temu, and so on), Nu-Kua was often reported as a female figure with a fish tail. Like many other primal Goddesses she stood for the cosmic water womb, which Pythagoreans named the Arche or 'first of elements.'

Nu-Kha also created the four pillars that upheld the sky, establishing the four directions, four "corners of the Earth," and four elements.(Walker, 1986, p. 14)

Walker continues to explain that Fu Hsi, like many other 'ancient gods of the cultural hero type,' was a brother-consort of this primal goddess, deriving his authority to rule based on her decree, and serving as an intermediary transmitting her cosmic wisdom of creation to earthly people. This is where we begin to return to the notion presented earlier of wisdom as having a female, receptive aspect and a male, projective, active aspect.
According to Walker (1986), this configuration of four pairs of heavenly and earthly elements which we find represented in the I Ching can be traced back to creation myths wherein the eight elemental principles, four male and four female, were born out of the womb of the Great Mother.

This exact configuration is represented in the imagery of the Tibetan mandala system which we will return to as part of the Tibetan teachings on how to negotiate transitions in life and death. In Tibetan mandalas, one central pair of deities (mother and father) are surrounded by the four pairs of deities, male and female, with each coupled pair representing the male and female wisdom aspects of each element, water in the east, earth in the south, fire in the west, and air in the north. Walker (1986) asserts that vestiges of this cosmological creation myth are still evident in the traditions of Egypt, Greece, Persia, India, the Middle East, China and Japan. Judging that this myth of origin dates back to a time six or seven thousand years ago, she refers to it as a ‘universal creation myth’ (pp. 1-8).

Whether or not the four pairs of elements can be traced back to such a ‘universal myth of creation’ is hard to establish for certain. However, it is evident to many scholars that Buddhist tantra has its origins in Indian Hindu tantras and the wisdom literature of Vedic lore. Ancient medical theories interest us, in our search to understand elemental wisdom in teacher training, because the body is the seat of the emotional energies that course through it, and ancient medical systems, being holistic in their outlook, naturally integrated the elemental emotional energies with theories of etiology and treatment of disease.

In the Ayur Veda, the universe is said to comprise the five elementary substances – water, earth, fire, wind and space. The human body is also understood as being made up of these five elements. Health is seen, therefore, as a perfect balance of the elements, while illness is caused by any number of many possible imbalances in the elements.
From this perspective, earth in the body manifests as firm tissue; water, as bodily fluids, especially mucous; fire as bile; wind as breath; and space as organic cavities. In this early Indian system, earth and space are understood as inert, while the other three are active. The three elements wind/breath, fire/bile, water/mucus are influenced by seasons, climactic changes and various other environmental, dietary and hygienic conditions. These conditions can speed up or slow down the action of any one of the three and thereby upset the ongoing balance of their processes in the body, causing disease. Because of the morbid states caused by their disequilibrium, these three elements have been referred to as the tridosha, or ‘triad of troubles.’

According to Rene Taton (1957), a historian of science and medicine, the Hippocratic treatise on breaths explains diseases as an imbalance in the elemental processes of nature quite similar to that of the ancient Vedic texts on winds and organic breaths. Furthermore, he claims that Plato’s description of pathology developed in the Timaeus is ‘almost indistinguishable from the doctrine of tridosha.’ He believes that Indian medical knowledge might have seeped through the Parthian Empire, which held power over much of India as well as parts of Greece, travelling along the trade routes described by Starbo and Pliny. He also claims that Aristoxenes of Tarentum reported seeing an Indian sage visiting with Socrates in Athens. Plato fails to mention his sources for the Timaeus and, according to Taton, his doctrine seems closer to that of the Indian than any contemporary Greek school. Although the Indian classical medical texts were written later than the Timaeus, their original sources predate any similar doctrine in Greece. Scholars of antiquity have also established various links between the pre-Socratic philosophers of Greece and the doctrines of Mideast and the Indian subcontinent. One such link between the thought of Heraclitus and the fire worship of Iran is elaborated by Duchesne-Guillemin (1963).

As far as we can tell from existing records, it seems that Empedocles was the first to devise a comprehensive system based on the four elements in ancient Greece. He was an important pre-Socratic philosopher, poet, physician, scientist, visionary mystic and healer.
and is often cited as the founder of modern chemistry. He came from Agrigentum but taught mostly in Sicily during the middle of the fifth century. This was a time when one individual could embrace all learning and be active in many diverse fields. His thinking seems to have been influenced by a combination of Ionian science and Pythagorean mysticism. According to his view:

Four elements than are at the root of all things. When they come together life is generated, and they separate at death. All objects of nature, animate and inanimate, are combinations of elements. They combine in different quantities and this determines the quality of an object. The driving forces, however, that impel elements to combine or separate are love and hate, attraction and repulsion.

This cosmological system of Empedocles proved to be a very workable instrument for understanding the connections between the universal macrocosms and the microcosms of the human body.

Early Hippocratic writings numbered the humours as unlimited and explained that when the elementary qualities affecting the humours were in balance, perfect health was the result. Later, four humours, two pairs with opposite qualities, were isolated as achieving this balance. These four were phlegm, blood, bile and water. Water was replaced by black bile to establish the humoral medical system that would flourish throughout Europe in the Middle Ages and continue in places such as Malaysia and parts of Central and South America to the present day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Humour</th>
<th>Season</th>
<th>Qualities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blood</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>Warm and Moist</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yellow Bile</td>
<td>Summer</td>
<td>Warm and Dry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black Bile</td>
<td>Autumn</td>
<td>Cold and Dry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phlegm</td>
<td>Winter</td>
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Galen, who lived in the second century and served as personal physician to the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius, was a philosopher as well as a physician, and wrote copiously on medical, philosophical and scientific issues. Galen is important because it was
he who first associated personality styles or temperaments with the humours and elements. It is interesting to note that Galen rejected the atomistic theory, popular in his time and introduced into medicine by Asclepiades. Instead, Galen practiced medicine according to the Hippocratic view that conceived all things to be composed of the four elements — water, earth, fire, and air — in union with inert matter and the four qualities of hot, cold, dry and moist. In this view of the nature of physical reality, Galen was in concordance with Aristotle, the Stoic school known as the Pneumatics and followed in the Greek medical tradition first established by Empedocles.

According to Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl (1964) Galen was also the first to clearly emphasize the connection between humours, bodily constitution and character. He wrote in a special monograph that 'spiritual disposition depends on the “crasis” in the body.' The important term 'crasis' implies the exact blending of the humours. Later Galen was to write:

Why is it that some people are amiable and laugh and jest, others are peevish, sullen and depressed, some again are irritable, violent and given to rages, while others are indolent, irresolute and timid? The casualties in the four humors. For those governed by the purest blood are agreeable, laugh, joke and have rosy, well-colored bodies; those governed by yellow bile are irritable, violent, bold and have fair, yellowish bodies; those governed by black bile are indolent, timid, ailing, and with regard to body, swarthy and black haired; but those governed by phlegm are sad, forgetful, and with regard to body, very pale. (Klibansky, Panofsky & Saxl, 1964, p. 59)

To summarize, the Galenic system of humours as character types looks like this:

The humour of blood is associated with the season of spring, the qualities warm and moist, and an amiable sanguine temperament.

The humour of yellow bile is associated with the season of summer, the qualities warm and dry, and an irritable, bold and violent choleric temperament.
The humour of black bile is associated with the season of autumn, the qualities dry and cold, and an indolent, depressive, anxious, timid and ailing melancholy temperament.

The humour of phlegm is associated with the season of winter, the qualities of moist and cold, and a sad and forgetful phlegmatic temperament.

The four temperaments have continued to be developed since the time of Galen throughout the Middle Ages and into the modern period. Jung's (1971) psychological types are related to these original temperaments, and the German psychiatrist Kretschmer (1925) also established temperamental theories in association with psychological types, as well as studying temperaments and psychosomatic illnesses. Currently, personality theories based on the four temperaments are having a revival in psychology and education in Keirsey and Bates (1978) and in the popular literature of Littauer (1983).
Humoral temperaments have also been applied to the education of children by Rudolf Steiner (1976; also see Harwood, 1958, and Spock, 1985). I find the Steiner approach to temperaments applied in the Waldorf Schools to be largely based on teacher intuition in the ways that it is understood and applied. The Waldorf approach to temperaments can lead us into developing further insights about the way in which the elemental wisdom principles might be applied within classroom and teaching situations.

In Steiner’s esoteric philosophical system human beings are made up of four components. These four include the purely physical body and the life-force or etheric body, both of which we inherit from our parents. The other two components are more spiritual or transcendental. They are the astral or consciousness body and finally the ultimate spiritual essence or what Steiner calls the ego. According to Steiner each of these four corresponds to one of the four temperaments. Nevertheless no single temperament is considered to be more desirable than another rather each one has its place in the dance of life. Each of the four can also degenerate into a complex morass of negative aspects or each can be polished into virtue and wisdom.

When the physical body dominates preventing the more refined and subtle energies of the other three to reach the outside world the melancholic temperament will result. If the life forces of the etheric body dominate then an interest in personal well being or phlegmatic temperament is evident. If the consciousness body or astral body is dominant then the person experiences a constant undirected flow of ideas and intense awareness of shifting sense impressions which is characterized as the sanguine temperament. Finally if the centre of a person’s being the spiritual ego dominates over the other principles that person will be possessed of great energy and tenacity manifesting the choleric temperament.

Steiner sees virtues in each temperament however if any one temperament takes over the personality an unhealthy lack of balance can result. Steiner explains madness then as the degeneration of a temperament that has overpowered the rest of the personality. In this way the moodiness of the melancholic can slide into severe depression with psychotic
delusions. A gradual but steadily decreasing interest in anything outside the self can lead the phlegmatic toward a state of vacant idiocy. The quickly shifting impressions of the sanguine can go out of control into a psychotic thought disorder. And the impatience of the choleric can degenerate into fits of rage and mania.

Steiner also observed that each phase in life reflects a general quality of one of the four temperaments. According to his scheme all children manifest a sanguine quality in their quickly shifting attention and free flow of emotions. Adolescence on the other hand brings out the strong will, ego drive, and impatience of the choleric. Adult life is characterized as the seriousness and purposeful nature of the melancholic temperament. While later life ideally takes on a reflective peace and calm in the dispassionate temperament of the phlegmatic. This is not to say that each individual will follow this course. Rather the point is that in general these phases of life bring out these temperaments.

For a Waldorf teacher identifying the predominant temperament of each pupil in the class is of the utmost importance. Steiner urged teachers to appreciate the distinct qualities in each of the temperaments and made it clear that there is no point in trying to change a child with a strong temperament. On the contrary his prescription was to give the child with a marked temperament full reign to play out the drama, the agony and the ecstasy of their particular temperament. The object of this approach is to give the child plenty of opportunities to learn how to work with their temperament so that as they grow up they will become the master of their temperament and not its slave. If a teacher or a parent tries to force a child to be opposite of what he is it will only cause the child to fall deeper and deeper into a rigid adherence to the negative qualities of his or her particular temperament. This is true for all the temperaments except one the sanguine. Apparently because the sanguine child (and all children to the extent that childhood has a sanguine temperament overall) is often overwhelmed by the flood of dissociative sensations and ideas it is useful to encourage a sense of order, predictability, and simplicity. Thus in the case of the sanguine temperament allowing free reign of expression is important yet strict adherence to
this principle all the time might lead to too much chaos so encouraging its opposite is beneficial toward establishing a balance.

With practical insight Steiner suggested that teachers group their students according to their temperament. This is not so that students find it easier to get along with others similar to themselves. On the contrary Steiner explained that the commonality forces a child to search within to bring out more balance. By confronting the negative aspects of your own character in the behaviour of another child sitting beside you it is easier to see how repulsive these traits can be.

For example, if a boisterous choleric punches his choleric neighbour he will most likely get punched back, where as, if he were seated near a shy and withdrawn melancholic child a pattern of intimidation and victimization may develop. The feeling of power will inspire a choleric child to become more bossy and short tempered whereas if he is confronted by the power of his own temperament he will become somewhat subdued.

Similarly, a group of phlegmatics sitting or working together will be come so bored with their collective lack of energy and colour that each in his or her own way will stretch beyond the limits of their timid complacency to manifest something unique. Thus in a very natural way through personal interactions each child will be forced to rise out of the negative tendencies of their own temperament and to find a more ideal balance.

Of course this approach can backfire when students of a similar temperament form a kind of unified front against the world thereby reinforcing and indulging in their temperament traits rather than bumping off one another to create a more healthy balance. This sort of thing is evidenced in street gangs and any adolescent tendency to find identity in a group of like individuals. However this is where the well trained eye of a good teacher comes in to recognize when sitting in groups is useful and when it is not.

Steiner compares this kind of classroom to an orchestra. Each student is seated in sections according to temperament as an orchestra is organized by instruments. In this way the teacher serves as the conductor setting the rhythm for the class while drawing on the
richness of tone, colour and pitch in each section to create harmony and melody as well as the drama of dissonance.

Knowing the temperament of each child is also invaluable for the teacher in setting his or her relationship with that child on the right footing. For example to win the loyalty of the choleric child a teacher must demonstrate decisive confidence, resourcefulness, skill and the capacity to accomplish things with economy. This will impress and inspire the choleric child helping him or her to direct excess energy into ever more challenging tasks.

A bond is made with the sanguine child through warmth, love encouragement and patience. A sanguine child needs to feel loved by an adult in order to anchor him or her on the earth and bring order to his or her dissociative mental world. Once a sanguine child feels loved he or she will go beyond the limits of his or her self discipline to maintain and enhance the approval of the teacher. In this way the sanguines will gradually learn to anchor themselves and their self discipline will flourish.

The melancholic child responds to genuine and heartfelt empathy. They feel things deeply and can tend to feel sorry for themselves as if no one will ever understand the depths of their suffering. Waldorf teachers are encouraged to listen to the melancholic intently and open up to the depths of their feelings while also reading or telling stories of the trials and tribulations of others both historical and contemporary to give the melancholic a sense of the universality of these feelings. Once melancholic children know that you too have a profound and somewhat secret world within they feel connected to you on that inner level and are more willing to share their best with you and the class.

There is no point in trying to inspire the uninspired phlegmatic with the qualities that might inspire a choleric or sanguine. Rather it is only through joining the phlegmatic in his or her peace and stillness that any mutual respect and sense of relationship can be established. With great patience and inner peace a teacher must out do the phlegmatic child at his or her own game. For example, Steiner suggests that telling a story very slowly in a monotonous voice with long pauses will incite the normally motionless phlegmatic child to
fidget and squirm and eventually respond to questions about the story in a relatively energetic and enthusiastic manner. A teacher must also demonstrate the positive attributes of the phlegmatic by bringing peace to the classroom with consistency, tolerance, adaptability and accommodation as well as by skill in mediating conflicts with patient and controlled diplomacy. This will model to the phlegmatic children their better half helping them to bring those potentialities to fruition in their personalities. Also if the teacher can highlight these positive social traits of the phlegmatic children, which are often overlooked, the phlegmatic child will feel appreciated and a vital part of the class.

The attention span and quality of attention is different for each of the four temperaments. It is easy to arouse the attention of sanguines yet, being the perennial children that they are, their attention almost immediately begins to stray. whether it strays out the window of the classroom or into the window of their own internal process makes little difference as it is their nature to dance along the surfaces, flitting from one thing to another.

It is also easy to arouse the attention of choleric children and they will tend to maintain their complete attention as long as the task demands it of them. If however the task demands that they maintain their concentration while nothing particularly active or exciting is happening they quickly lose patience and their attention will shift to wherever there is a more adventurous and energetic activity to engage in. For example a group of choleric boys on a field trip to a farm will be fully engrossed while taking a try at running the large machinery yet they will resort to roughhousing while watching someone else churn butter from cream with an old fashioned wooden churn.

It is difficult to capture the attention of melancholics yet once they make the effort to bring their attention to something it is strong and steadfast. They may be lost in the depths of their internal experience and it may take some time for them to appreciate a new stimuli. However, once their curiosity is piqued they will seriously examine whatever is within their intense focus with attention to detail and a persistent tendency toward perfection.
The attention of the phlegmatic is difficult to arouse and difficult to maintain as he or she is often content to stare blankly into space. Their nonchalant attitude can leave their powers of attention weak and underdeveloped. Yet they often perceive more than you would expect, in spite of their inattention. They are particularly interested in watching others and often learn how to do things by watching others. They are genuinely interested in others and this is the best way to arouse their attention. For example, a phlegmatic child will come to the aid of other children when they are hurt. Their attention is perhaps broader in context yet softer in focus than that of others. They pay less attention to detail and more attention to overall patterns and tendencies.

In designing a curriculum, Waldorf teachers take the temperaments into consideration, integrating a provocative and well balanced diversity into their lesson planning. In an elementary grammar lesson the choleric children will find themselves interested in the verbs and they will enjoy acting them out. While the sanguine children might delight in the nouns and dreaming up all the different kinds of animals and things that could be found at different locations – in the forest, at the zoo or under the sea – the melancholics will enjoy the subtle distinctions and poetic descriptiveness of adjectives, while the phlegmatic might appreciate the prepositions and conjunctions that hold everything else together.

Likewise the story problems in mathematics might also reflect the natural inclinations and interests of each temperament. The choleric will jump at a chance to figure out problems involving speed and acceleration as well as questions concerning how many man hours it would take to complete a specific set of tasks. While the sanguine might be more thrilled in working on problems that deal with large amounts of money and problems where sums grow larger and larger through multiplication. Melancholics might appreciate problems where amounts steadily decrease as a problem describing how to counteract ongoing pollution or one describing bilateral disarmament. Finally a phlegmatic temperament might be most intrigued by the balance and symmetry of equations and geometric proofs.
We can see that teachers in Waldorf Schools use their knowledge and intuitive awareness of the four temperaments on a daily basis in order to enhance learning and development for each child and to enhance the sense of harmony in the ways that they relate with the class as a whole. Waldorf teachers develop their intuition of the temperaments through years of on-going study and years of teaching experience. By training teachers in elemental wisdom through meditation it is my thought that young teachers might learn to intuit similar principles early on in their careers and then enrich and refine this wisdom base as they gain further experience as teachers over the years.

We have seen how an awareness of distinct qualities symbolized as the elements has been developed into classification systems in a variety of cultures and historical periods. In particular we have seen how the notion of elements in the West led to various systems of humours, temperaments and learning styles. Now let us turn to an examination of the elements in Tibetan Buddhist teachings in order to derive some insight into the meaning of elements in this system especially in relation to the process of awakening inherent wisdom.
CHAPTER 15 NOTES

1. Though slightly reminiscent of Aristotle's distinction between the celestial aither and the terrestrial pneuma, these two spheres of the elements, though distinct in their qualities, are not in any way separated from each other, but fused in an interpenetrating and complementary continuum mixing in all possible permutations. This is represented in the hexagrams in the following way – a trigram representing a transcendent elemental essence such as heavenly air, 'Creative Power,' Ch'ien, can take a place in terrestrial affairs (represented by the lower half of each hexagram and corresponding to 1. instincts, 2. self-interest and 3. individual endeavours) or vice versa – a terrestrial elemental principle like 'wind,' Sun, can take a place in the higher positions, representing what are characterized as more sublime or heavenly matters (4. social consciousness, 5. leadership, 6. wisdom). This system of integrating the celestial set of elements with the terrestrial set as they coincide and synchronize in the affairs of human beings represents the detailed description of joining heaven and earth, a favourite wisdom principle of the Chinese but also popular in classical Greek philosophy, neo-Platonism and Gnostic Christianity (Miller, 1986; Friedlander, 1958; Hamilton & Huntington, 1961; West, 1984; Armstrong, 1966) as well as in Stoic philosophy (Sambursky, 1959) and Native American spirituality (Black Elk & Lyon, 1990). Walker (1986) speculates why the four elements were multiplied to become eight and makes some interesting connections:

'Apparently, it was necessary to duplicate each elemental spirit to the total of eight because 8 was the first cubed number, regarded with awe as the expression of all dimensions in space. Also, the ancients generally set some kind of intermediary between the pure essence of divinity and the weak, finite senses of mortals. Just as human eyes couldn't behold the sun's essential fire without being blinded but could look steadily at a flame, so it was thought each divine element must be brought down to the level of human comprehension by assuming an earthly form or a humanlike manifestation – the basic Son-of-God or Logos theory, which was common everywhere in the ancient world' (p. 5).


3. Bastien (1989) compares Greek humoural theory with a similar yet transformed theory still practiced by the Kallawaya indigenous Andean people of midwestern Bolivia. These people had a cosmological and medical system before the Spanish invaded in the 16th century, and they seemed to have incorporated the European humoural theories with their indigenous system to form a locally-evolving hybrid. A similar hybrid humoural system has evolved under the stewardship of the shamanistic healers in Malaysia (see Laderman, 1991).

4. Galen's writings were preserved and followed by physicians of the High Arabic civilizations while most other medical texts of Ancient Greece were lost or destroyed during the general destruction of classical culture. His texts served as one of the only representatives of the Hippocratic tradition through these times until Hippocratic texts were rediscovered just prior to the Renaissance. During the Renaissance, however, Galen's writings fell from prominence due to his idiosyncratic interpretation of Hippocratic teachings.
Chapter 16
The Mandala of Five Wisdoms
in Life and Death

- A map of consciousness
- Centre and fringe
- White light splits into rainbow wisdom lights
- Five Buddha families
- Six realms
- Five heaps co-emerging with five wisdoms
- Like clouds appearing in the clear blue sky and re-emerging into it
- Five poisons: ignorance, desire, aggression, pride, jealousy
- A gap between the past and future
- Six bardos: a perpetual process of psychological impermanence
- Body, speech and mind
- Anxiety: a pre-verbal creative stewing process
- Dying: earth dissolves into water, water into fire, fire into air, and air into space
- The embrace of male and female Buddhas
- A cold/hot shower
- Visions from the heart
- Bright lights and dull lights

Figure 12. Simplified Tibetan Mandala
The ancient ‘universal creation myth’ (Walker 1986) discussed above in relation to the *I Ching* is preserved more or less in its original form in the Tibetan mandala system of the five elemental wisdoms. As seen above the central male and female deities (original mother and father) are flanked on each side, front and back by the four deity couples. These four sets of deities represent male and female wisdom aspects associated with the four elements and are reminiscent of the eight trigrams of the *I Ching*.

From the Buddhist contemplative perspective, which uses meditation to observe the workings of consciousness in minute detail, this ‘creation myth’ is understood more as a map of consciousness than as a story about something that happened once upon a time. From a non-dualistic perspective that does not separate subject and object, the cosmos as such is recreated every instant in the constant recreation and reformation of consciousness. As most creation myths are meant to be, these Tibetan teachings on the mandala of the five wisdoms are designed to provoke insight into how we form our world each moment and thereby encourage us to take more responsibility for the vast intelligence and power inherent in that process.

The Tibetan term for the Sanskrit ‘mandala’ is *kilkor*, which literally means centre and fringe. ‘Centre’ implies, in this scheme, that all phenomena are part of one reality. Everything within the boundaries of the mandala can be unified into one dot at the centre, yet it can also be understood in its diversity and complexity of interrelated patterns as depicted. The iconographic depiction of deities in the mandala represent different aspects of enlightened mind. These deities are always organized around a centre.

The formation of consciousness begins from the centre and moves outward in three basic levels: centre, intermediate and fringe. The centre of the mandala represents the formless brilliance of unconditioned mind in the unitive experience of complete enlightenment. This is the ground of consciousness altogether, and from the Buddhist perspective, this totally open mind, devoid of all categories and conditioning is constantly available to all of us. Like white light that has not yet split into the spectrum of different colours, Tibetan
Buddhists conceive of mind in its ultimate nature as ‘luminous and empty.’ ‘Luminous’ implies the ability to cognize, and ‘empty’ means that mind is empty of concepts and empty of conditioning.

This self-luminous and empty mind is hard to grasp because there is nothing to hold onto. According to the teachings given in Tibetan texts, such as the one regarding the death experience, which we will examine, this luminous and empty mind splits into five wisdom lights, also luminous and brilliant, but now colourful and filled with qualities. These qualities are described in relation to the elements of space, water, earth, fire and wind and are sometimes represented by the five pairs of deities in sexual union. This subtle level of the colours, lights and elemental wisdoms is said to exist in our experience as the emotional energies which are the basis of thought, speech and all manner of communication. This is the intermediate level we have noted before which lies between formless mind energy and actual physical manifestation. In this in-between level consciousness moves through each element in succession toward action in the physical world.

The deities of the mandala are organized into what are called buddha families. The central pair of deities in the mandala are like the mother and father of all experience. They represent the wisdom energy of primordial space which, like some Western conceptions of ether, is not empty but shining like a brilliant white light pregnant with all forms of vital energy. Then come the deities of the vajra family, representing the water element in the east, deities of the ratna family representing earth in the south, deities of the padma family representing fire in the west, and deities of the karma family representing wind in the north. Finally, moving to the fringe of the mandala, mind manifests in the material experience we know as the physical reality of our perceptions and our own bodies.

This is one way to describe what is called a mandala of enlightened mind, or non-dual mind. The mandala of dualistic mind has exactly the same structure but is known in Buddhist psychology as the five skhandhas. I have discussed the five skhandhas briefly before in relation to Ken Wilber’s full spectrum development while examining how they
correspond to the stages of ego development in childhood as studied and mapped out in Western psychology. It seems useful now, however, to review the process of ego development through the skhandhas as a fluid process, because previously the discussion was broken up within the context of Western psychology, and because an understanding of the relationship between the skhandhas and the elemental wisdoms is central to understanding how emotional energy and neurotic confusion can be transmuted into non-dual wisdom and compassion in the present moment.

The skhandhas also seem to have a relationship with the way in which the contemplative practice of maitri space awareness effects a practitioner's psychological processes. The postures and coloured rooms seem to isolate and then exaggerate one elemental energy at a time to create an emotionally intensified state of mind. One's normal process of re-creating a familiar habitual consciousness in the rapid repetition of the five skhandha process is slightly distorted by the practice, and an intensified realm is the result. There are six of these psychological realms, one associated with each of the four elements and two associated with space. Experiencing these exaggerated states of mind in the context of a contemplative practice which includes heightened awareness is supposed to give one the opportunity to experience the raw psychophysical energy of the elements in order to transform the neurotic energy of dualistic confusion into non-dual wisdom.

As we have seen, Skhandhas are heaps, and refer to a series of many steps in a fluid process. Heap implies that, for the purposes of teaching, this fluid process has been loosely gathered up into categories like five heaps of straw sitting in a meadow. More to the point, these heaps might be imagined as mental linkages, like little chain reactions that build up one upon the other to fabricate dualistic consciousness and confusion in our minds. However, their essential stuff is none other than the luminous five wisdoms mentioned above. In the samsaric mandala, we might say each wisdom arises side by side with its corresponding skhandha or, as Buddhists say, the two co-emerge.
The first *skhandha*, known as form, begins when something happens in the simplicity of luminous empty space, like a spark that flashes, or a sudden crystal forming. With this shift, a vague sense of duality is born, and with it, the root of consciousness. This duality is the basis of a split between subject and object. From the perspective of teachings in Tibetan Buddhist tantra, it is possible to experience this first phase, or the seed of dualistic consciousness, without identifying with the subject and thereby experience instead of dualistic consciousness the pure wisdom energy of the subtle water element. In this way the elemental wisdom associated with the element of water, mirror-like wisdom, is said to co-emerge with this first of the five skhandhas, the skhandha of form.

Then comes the *skhandha* of feeling, which adds to the basic split three primordial responses that the subject can have in response to the object. These three possible responses are attraction, repulsion and indifference, like a tiny one-celled creature that will advance to absorb a nutrient, retreat to avoid danger, or simply be with no change. This second phase in the process of formulating what we as human beings experience as consciousness is said to co-emerge with the wisdom energy associated with the element of earth, known as the wisdom of equanimity.

Next is the *skhandha* of perception or discernment, for now a more detailed world begins to dawn as sensory projection with colours, qualities and characteristics. This co-emerges with the wisdom energy of fire, known as the wisdom of discriminating awareness.

The fourth *skhandha*, mental categories or formations, adds to all this the development of thoughts and mental concepts. This *skhandha* of concept formation co-emerges with the wisdom energy of the air and wind element which is known as all-accomplishing wisdom.

Finally, the fifth *skhandha* is called consciousness, and is just that — what we are generally conscious of after all these heaps have been heaped up together. The fifth skhandha completes the fabrication process by a kind of whitewash or plaster, filling in and
smoothing over any irregularities or gaps that were left untidy by the other four. This final skhandha co-emerges with the wisdom energy of space and is known as the wisdom of all-potentiality. As might be expected, there is a link between this final phase of the cycle and the very beginning. Like clouds that appear in a clear blue sky and then disappear back into it, the skhandhas arise from space at the beginning and dissolve back into space at the end. This gap of empty sky in the cycle is an access point, in our experience and in our meditation practice, to the unconditioned and luminous mind of primordial space.

Hayward (1987) investigates the process of skhandhas in light of contemporary research into the process of perception. Hayward shows us that the insights gained in meditation regarding the skhandha process of fabricating the illusion of a self are in some ways parallel to descriptions reached independently through research into how perception happens as a process in time.

In the text popularly known as the Tibetan Book of the Dead (The Great Liberation Through Hearing in the Bardo Freemantle and Trungpa 1975)\(^2\) alleged to have been composed and then hidden by the eighth-century Indian master Padmasambhava, who introduced Tantric Buddhism to Tibet, a mandala of the five buddha families is said to dominate or govern one’s experience in the period occurring after one has died. Despite the fact that such claims of after-death experience can be looked at as merely fanciful religious ideas from the contemporary Western perspective, this text is nonetheless valuable, as it can be understood more as a wisdom teaching concerning the psychological experience of impermanence and transitions in life, that is, the little births and deaths that occur in our daily experience.\(^3\) As Trungpa explains in his commentary on this text:

this book is not only a message for those who are going to die and those who are already dead, but it is also a message for those who are already born; birth and death apply to everybody constantly, at this very moment. ... The details presented here are very much what happens in our daily living situation, they are not just psychedelic experiences or visions that appear after death. (p. 2)
This mandala of the five wisdoms can also be experienced in our daily lives as the samsaric mandala of ego which contains the six realms of existence. This samsaric mandala of ego describes the pattern of how we set up our world from the false reference point of self at the centre which maintains confusion, a sense of struggle, anxiety and suffering. The mind mandala of enlightened wisdom energies and the samsaric mandala of ego are said to arise simultaneously as the raw psychophysical energies of the elements. If we maintain a dualistic split between self and other, these energies manifest as confusion of the five poisons, which are ignorance, desire, aggression, pride and jealousy. If we can inhabit an open space, sensitive to the fluid process without clinging to a sense of self as a reference point or any false security in solidifying an objective 'other,' then these raw energies are available to manifest as non-dual wisdom.

Imagining ourselves as the centre of our world, we attempt to possess and manipulate the spontaneously existing wisdom energies of the elements. We might conceptualize that these energies have a naturally appropriate and balanced way of ordering our relationship to phenomena when left alone to be as they are. Yet when we set ourselves apart from them and attempt to manipulate them, we set up a situation of continuous unfulfillment and struggle trying to get what we think we want or avoiding what we think we don't want. The teachings explain that a realm is created when we magnify our basic emotional attachments in this struggle into a complete illusory world. A realm seems to exist independently of our consciousness as we interpret our projections as reality and lose sight of how the illusory prison of a realm is self-imposed. All of us have some experience of all six realms. We constantly recreate the six realms and cycle through them in various different patterns in order to buffer ourselves from the intensity of enlightened mind. The enlightened mandala of the five wisdoms seems threatening because it is too powerful, too vast, and has no self as a central reference point. We have the opportunity to glimpse this enlightened mind mandala constantly, yet our habitual tendency is to recreate over and over the limited realms that we find to be more manageable.
The Tibetan word for the 'intermediate state' or 'gap,' transliterated into English as 'bardo,' consists of two parts: 'bar' meaning 'in between' and 'do' meaning 'island' or 'mark.' Trungpa explains that the idea of bardo is:

... a sort of landmark which stands between two things. It is rather like an island in the midst of a lake. The concept of bardo is based on the period between sanity and insanity, or the period between confusion and the confusion just about to be transformed into wisdom; and of course it could be said of the experience which stands between death and birth. The past situation has just occurred and the future situation has not yet manifested itself so there is a gap between the two. This is basically the bardo experience. (Freemantle & Trungpa, 1975, pp. 10-11)

The writing of this paper could be understood as a bardo, as could any life experience. However, as I would like to point out, the term seems particularly useful in understanding the experience of learning. For learning always implies going to somewhere unknown by a route that at the beginning is equally unknown -- a process of transforming confusion into wisdom.

The Buddhist teaching of impermanence finds, perhaps, its most comprehensive and subtle expression in the Tibetan notion of bardo. Tibetans generally speak of six bardos. These are: 1. the bardo of this life, 2. the bardo of dying, that begins when we meet with a fatal illness or another cause of death, up to the point when we actually expire, 3. the bardo of dharmata, which occurs when we have fully passed away and involves the experience of the five wisdom energies or the luminosity of the five Buddhas (the five pairs of deities), as well as the confused version of this energy as the six realms, and 4. the bardo of becoming, which arises out of not recognizing true wisdom nature in the bardo of dharmata and gathers force up to the time of being conceived in a womb. The two other bardos occur during the bardo of this life. These are known as: 5. the bardo of the meditation experience and 6. the dream bardo. This cycle of bardos covers all phases in the
processes of life and death, explaining every state as an 'in-between' state, or a perpetual process of impermanence.

These cycles, seen as the essential process of consciousness, are also acknowledged as occurring at various different levels all the time, during both life and death, like a nearly ceaseless series of concentric circles. This means that even in a fraction of second conscious involving a birth and death, or a coming together and letting go. This teaching is specifically designed to evoke an experience or a sense that there is never any permanent ground to cling to, never, not in the experience of a lifetime nor in the tiniest flicker of a half thought.

To simplify matters, the text that we are using, known also as The Great Liberation Through Hearing in the Bardo (bar-do'i-thos-grol), concentrates specifically on only three of the six: the bardo of dying, the bardo of dharmata, and the bardo of becoming. These three represent the essence of the process, and a complete understanding of these three is all that is needed. I am presenting here the process of the first two bardos, as the third seems to follow logically and is also described in the form of the six realms, which I will describe more fully in relation to each wisdom.

The Tibetan Buddhist approach traditionally conceives of our existence/non-existence as composed of three parts, or simultaneously and sequentially flickering aspects. These can be understood quite simply as body, speech and mind. Body refers to the gross physical or material level of empirical, sensual and physical awareness. Speech encompasses a more subtle level of communication, emotion, cognition and mental constructs. Finally, mind refers to unconditioned consciousness. Body, speech and mind are the terms used to refer to these three components from the point of view of unenlightened confusion or samsaric existence as most of us experience it, while the Sanskrit terms for these three aspects for an enlightened Buddha are: nirmanakaya, the body of a Buddha; sambogakaya, the speech of a Buddha; and dharmakaya, the mind of a Buddha.
These three components can be correlated with the three bardos. That is to say, the bardo of the moment of death (a more specific term referring to the pinnacle of the bardo of dying and the transition into the bardo of dharmata, it also known as the ‘empty luminosity’ or the ‘luminosity of the first bardo’) corresponds to mind and dharmakaya; the bardo of dharmata corresponds to speech and sambogakaya; and the bardo of becoming, taking birth, corresponds to body and nirmanakaya. With these correspondences, we have another way of understanding the processes of the three bardos in our moment-to-moment awareness of everyday life. Any activity involves a synchronization of body and mind through the intermediary of speech or the aspect of communication and emotional energies.

For example, in the experience of writing this work there is a descending process from mind through the level of elemental energies into words on the page. I began with a blank computer screen and an open mind. I had studied and had a room full of books, but these were all potentials in my mind and not yet concrete forms. The openness of that blankness represents at once a sense of freedom and a sense of threat.

In the face of this threatening freedom I experience anxiety and a churning of various emotional energies in my body, a type of pre-verbal creative stewing process. The more I can relax in the middle of this formless stewing anxiety, the more I am able to reconnect with that rhythm in the stillness which I experienced while sitting high up on the sandstone slabs in the Garden of the Gods. Learning how to tolerate the churning energies, I become more sensitive to the subtle nuances in the accents, tones and textures of their rhythms. When I learn to relax further and further with this energy, I get in touch with the subtle music of my own pre-thought, pre-verbal and formerly ‘unconscious’ creative process. But I cannot tolerate this anxiety for too long, no matter how much I might want to put off writing. So, all at once, in the form of an overall structure or outline, my feelings take shape as ideas. Then, bit by bit, the words are born upon the screen. This is the process of birth. Now let us examine the process of dying, death and beyond death into the gap in more detail.
The bardo of dying is characterized as a period of dissolving and letting go. One begins to actually lose one's grip on one's physical existence, losing the sensation of the physical body and environment. The elements that make up the physical body dissolve sequentially one into the other. Tibetan texts describe what it feels like at each stage of dissolving. Sogyal (1992) summarizes some of these descriptions. First, as earth dissolves into water, our body begins to lose all of its strength and energy. There is a feeling of great weight, as if being crushed by a mountain, and a sensation of great heaviness and discomfort in the body. Then one may experience an excess of fluids such as mucus, saliva and tears, and one may become incontinent. Then, as water dissolves into fire, the circulation begins to cease functioning and there is an intense sensation of dryness and thirst. The skin is parched, dry, pale and lifeless. As fire dissolves into air, any sense of warmth ceases, extremities grow colder, and then this cold gradually extends to the rest of the body, while the ability to perceive also begins to fade and the sense is of being surrounded by a roaring blaze of fire. Then, as air dissolves into space, all movement ceases while the breath and vital energy expire as one loses any sensation of contact with the physical world. 'Finally when space or consciousness dissolves into the central nadi (channel), there is a sense of internal luminosity, an inner glow, when everything has become completely introverted.' This is a time when Tibetans still regard the consciousness as present in the body and are therefore loathe to move it or disturb it while from a Western medical standpoint, the person is clinically dead and the body in need of being disposed of properly.

One might experience this sense of dissolving in a more subtle way as one approaches the end or transition of any major phase of life, such as leaving home as a maturing adolescent, graduating from university, getting married, having children, experiencing the death of a loved one, losing one's job, retiring etc. The physical sensations and corresponding emotions may also occur during less profound transitions such as saying goodbye to a loved one for a brief vacation, finishing a personally
meaningful work project, or upon entering and leaving a room, and even with the passing of each thought. In each case, a situation is ending and the consciousness of being rooted in a specific context dissolves temporarily. Before the next situation takes shape there is the gap or bardo, an experience of ‘emptiness luminosity,’ the pure potential energy without colour, form or quality.  

The essence of Buddhist meditation practice is to become familiar with the intensity of this empty, unconditioned experience in life in order to relax the normal fear of annihilation, which causes clinging to a fabricated sense of a permanent self. Furthermore, from the point of view of the Buddhist teachings, this naturally occurring experience of emptiness luminosity is the ultimate ground of liberation and the source of any sense of freedom from past conditioning in everyday life.

Trungpa evokes the quality of the experience in words as the simultaneity of pleasure and pain, or like a ‘powerful shower of icy cold water and boiling hot water.’ Accordingly, it is a rare individual who remains awake and consciously aware during this repeatedly and naturally occurring phase. Whether we speak of it in terms of the transitions occurring every instant, the more significant life-altering transitions, or the actual death experience itself, the most common response to this emptiness luminosity is to become unconscious, blocking it out of our awareness.

According to the text, accomplished meditators are able to recognize this emptiness luminosity of the first bardo without becoming unconscious or confused. They fearlessly awaken to the intensity of the primordial wisdom mind. Riding it like a lightning bolt they are thereby liberated from conditioned existence. Most of us, however, become overwhelmed by the intense energy fall unconscious and then regain awareness in the dreamlike state of the next bardo the bardo of dharmata, which unfolds its drama of the five wisdom lights and the six duller lights of the six realms.

This bardo of dharmata relates to the intermediate sphere between mind and matter which is the sphere of subtle energy bodies known in Buddhism as the sambogakaya. This
is the bardo of subtle energies personified as deities and categorized as the five elements, earth, water, fire, air and space. These subtle energies are the diverse wisdoms which we experience in life within our thoughts, our emotions and in our communications with others. In this bardo however one awakens to the these elements not in their gross physical manifestation, but on a more subtle level.

In the previous bardo, any flicker of duality was abolished in a totally unified state of awareness. However, in this bardo, the play of duality is reestablished as a very subtle sense of an observer and projections which are observed. One’s awareness of a self is experienced as what the text refers to as a ‘pure illusory body,’ and the projections, which in reality are not separate from one’s own mind, manifest as a series of encounters with the five sets of male and female deities or primordial Buddhas embracing in sexual union.

Trungpa in his commentary explains that although there is a subtle quality of duality happening at this phase, it is nothing at all like perception. It is not seen as a vision because there is no one to look and nothing to see. As he says, ‘you cannot even know it, because as long as there is a watcher to tell you that these are your experiences, you are still separating those energies away from you’ (Freemantle & Trungpa, p. 11). Therefore, we must understand the iconographical symbolism purely as a representation of an experience of a duality so subtle that it cannot be evoked in any conventional way.

If, however, we recall the quality of our sensations during intense emotional experiences such as when we are ‘possessed with rage,’ ‘head over heels in love,’ or ‘insane with jealousy,’ we may recall a feeling of energy or a subtle quivering feeling that pervades the body or concentrates itself in a particular area of the body. These feelings, perhaps explained from the view of materialistic science and medicine as chemical changes in the body set off by the endocrine system triggered by emotionally significant stimuli, can have a peculiarly vivid or luminous quality. Speaking from personal experience, I have found in rare moments that if I do not separate myself from the physical sensations and quality of emotional energy by attempting to name the emotion and then think about it, or if
I don't avoid feeling it altogether, through acting it out or by suppressing it, then I experience the emotion as a kind of painful/pleasurable vacuous intensity. This, as far as I can tell, is what is represented by the description of lights and visions in this bardo. It is an experience very close to our hearts.

O son of noble family, those realms too do not exist anywhere else, but lie in the four directions of your heart with the center as fifth, and now they emerge from within your heart and appear before you. Those images too do not come from anywhere else, but are the primordial spontaneous play of your mind, so recognize them in this way ...

(Freemantle & Trungpa, 1975, p. 51)

According to the text, the essential experience of this bardo is that each element – space, water, earth, fire and air – in its purified or subtle form shines out in sequence as a coloured light, and at the same time a vision of the appropriate male and female wisdom Buddhas embracing in union appears, and a second light intensifies in brilliance, shining out from their heart centres. The experience of these lights is the experience of one particular style or type of luminosity wisdom. It is such an intense and vivid experience that the normal tendency is to avoid it. Out of this tendency to avoid the brilliance of the primary wisdom light, a softer, more comforting light arises and beckons one toward it. It is more familiar and less frightening and represents the tendency to pervert the pure wisdom luminosity by possessing it, objectifying it, or attempting to manipulate it toward self-serving tendencies. This is the dualistic and neurotic approach which backfires, causing the continuation of suffering and the perpetuation of samsara. This softer light in each case also represents the doorway to birth in one of the six realms of existence.

One might think of the basic structure of this text as being like a piece of music, something like a symphony, which brings up a basic theme in variations. It dramatically portrays a choice point that occurs over and over as part of the structure of our conscious awareness, or our not so conscious lack of awareness, as the case may be. The following excerpt from the text is presented as an example of this basic structure, which repeats itself
ten times, five peaceful representations of the elemental energies and five wrathful representations. This particular example is drawn from the appearance of the second of the five wisdoms lights as they arise during the period in the bardo of *dharmata* known as the arising of the peaceful deities.

O son of noble family, listen without distraction. On the second day, a white light, the purified element of water will shine, and at the same time Blessed Vajrasattva-Aksobhya will appear before you from the blue eastern Realm of Complete Joy.... The white light of the skandha of form in its basic purity, the mirror-like wisdom, dazzling white, luminous and clear will come towards you from the heart of Vajrasattva and his consort and pierce you so that your eyes cannot bear to look at it. At the same time, together with the wisdom light, the soft smoky light of hell beings will also come towards you and pierce you. At that time, under the influence of aggression, you will be terrified and escape from the brilliant white light, but you will feel an emotion of pleasure towards the soft smoky light of the hell-beings. At that moment do not be afraid of the shape, brilliant, luminous and clear white light but recognize it as wisdom.... Do not take pleasure in the soft smoky light of the hell-beings. This is the inviting path of your neurotic veils, accumulated by violent aggression. If you are attracted to it you will fall down into hell, and sink into the muddy swamp of unbearable suffering from which there is no escape.

(Freemantle & Trungpa, 1975, p. 43)

The imagery of this Tibetan text may seem foreign, but the basic message that wisdom has an intensely brilliant quality which can seem terrifying, and that we tend to want to escape from this brilliance by perpetuating our familiar neurotic patterns, comes through clearly. Contemplative training for teachers is one way for them to become more conscious of the brilliant energy of their own wisdom potential and more aware that they always have a choice to face their fear and develop wisdom or to escape the brilliance of mind by trying to hide in the more familiar cycles of confusion. The important thing to remember is that the energy of the wisdom lights is essentially not separate from the energy that can become distorted as a neurotic realm. This means that even in the height of
emotional confusion, both teachers and students are never separated from wisdom mind. When teachers learn to feel comfortable with the unfolding process of their own confusion and fearlessly step through it to meet the brilliance of wisdom, their students will more than likely follow their example.

Now that we understand something about the experience of elemental energies in the transition phase between death and birth let us explore in more depth how each of the five elemental energies manifest in our daily life in order to discriminate wisdom from confusion.
CHAPTER 16 NOTES

1. The following description is a brief summary of teachings on the five skhandhas given by Trungpa (1987) in *Glimpses of Abhidharma*.

2. In addition to relying upon the original text as translated by Freemantle and Trungpa (1975) and the Commentary by Trungpa, I am indebted to classes and seminars given on this topic by Judith Lief, the former Dean of Naropa Institute. I have borrowed here from my notes of her talks, particularly from a class on *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* given as part of the M.A. Psychology program at Naropa in the fall of 1982, and a seminar given in Halifax in 1986. Sogyal (1992) is another source for contemporary explications of the original Tibetan text.

3. The constant awareness of death as an ever-present part of life is the basis of a good many wisdom teachings throughout many different cultures in the world. Socrates is reported to have said in a dialogue with one of his students 'that true philosophers make dying their profession' (Tredennick, 1954, pp. 112-113). Socrates believed that the body and soul were dualistically opposed to each other and that the body was a kind of outer garment that confines the soul, which becomes liberated at the time of death. Hindus have a similar view: 'As (one) casts off... worn-out clothes/and takes on other new ones/So does the embodied soul cast off its worn-out bodies/And enters others new,' from the Bhagavad Gita 2:19-22 (Edgerton, 1944). Hindu poetry also acknowledges the value of knowing death in life: 'Between the doors/ of birth and death/ stands yet another door/ wholly inexplicable./ He who is able/ to be born/ at the door of death/ is devoted eternally/ ... Die before dying, die living' (Gopal, 1969, p. 65). The words of Suzuki Shosan, a Samurai warrior turned Zen monk, also echo this same refrain: 'just by practicing dying,' he said in answer to a question about how to attain realization (King, 1977, p. 145). And Jesus tells us: 'unless a wheat grain falls on the ground and dies,/ it remains only a single grain,/ but if it dies,/ it yields rich harvest' (John 12:24-25). For Chuang Tzu, life and death are part of one continuity: 'Life is the companion of death, death is the beginning of life. Who understands their workings? (Our) life is a coming together of breath. If it comes together, there is life; if it scatters, there is death. And if life and death are companions to each other, then what is there for us to be anxious about? (Watson, 1968, p. 235). The Lakota Warrior cry and daily prayer of Chief Crazy Horse celebrates death as a constant companion: 'Hoka hey! Follow me/ Today is a good day to fight/ Today is a good day to die' (La Pointe, 1976, p. 160). All of these death wisdom teachings and many more can be found in Kramer (1988). Other anthologies on the topic are Renynolds and Wangh (1977), Eliade (1967) and Toynbee (1968).

4. In the tradition of Abhidharma or Buddhist psychology, the shortest span of experience is usually said to be 1/60th of a second (see Guenther, 1974).


6. This experience of emptiness luminosity related to the Mahayana Buddhist term shunyata, and variously known in this particular Tibetan tradition as the 'luminosity of the first bardo' or the mother luminosity, is the experience of unconditioned mind, or what is known as dharmakaya, the mind of the Buddha. This 'emptiness luminosity' is contrasted to the 'apparent luminosity' of the five wisdom energies that is said to be experienced in the next bardo, the bardo of dharmata.

7. *O son of noble family, listen. Now the pure luminosity of the dharmata is shining before you; recognise it. O son of noble family, at this moment your state of mind is by nature pure emptiness, it does not possess any nature whatever, neither substance nor quality such as colour, but it is pure emptiness; this is the dharmata, the female Buddha Samantabhadri. But this state of mind is not just blank emptiness, it is unobstructed, sparkling, pure and vibrant; this mind is the male Buddha Samantabhadra. These two, your mind whose nature is emptiness without any substance whatever, and your mind which is vibrant and luminous, are inseparable; this is the dharmakaya of the Buddha. This mind of yours is inseparable luminosity and emptiness in the form of a great mass of light, it has no birth or death, therefore it is the Buddha of Immortal Light. To recognise this is all that is necessary. When you recognise this pure nature of your mind as the Buddha, looking into your own mind is resting in the Buddha-mind* (Freemantle & Trungpa, 1975, p. 37).

In this passage Samantabhadra and Samantabhadri, the primordial Buddhas, male and female, symbolize the inseparability of wisdom and compassionate action, the two coefficients of enlightenment. As the embodiment or personified symbols of the dharmakaya, they are the origin or mother and father of the five buddha family wisdoms in the samboekakaya.
PART IV
The Five ElementalWisdoms
Chapter 17
Vajra: The Wisdom Energy of Water

- Indestructible diamond wisdom
- Intellect
- Delineates boundaries to simplify and clarify
- Winter ice, clear and cold
- A roaring, torrential river or a clear, deep, reflecting pool
- The distance of objectivity
- Too close brings irritation-claustrophobia-anger
- A cold glare keeps 'em away
- Freezing reality into manageable ice cubes that fit and make sense
- Impatient, judgmental teachers
- I’m right and you’re wrong
- Perfectionism
- Structure vs. claustrophobia cycle
- Wisdom so bright it scares the self
- Hell realm
- The sharp eye of psychosis
- The critical voice
- Making friends with one's own aggressive energy
- Noticing how we give birth to ourselves and our world
- A deep respect for nature’s structures
- Seeing each child freshly in every moment gives them the freedom to be who they are

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The wisdom associated with the subtle energy of the element of water resides in the eastern quadrant of the mandala and is related to the deity Vajrasattva (Diamond-being), as we have seen in the bardo text quoted in the previous chapter. It is associated in some traditions with white light, and in others with the colour blue. When distorted, this energy manifests as some of the many forms of anger. When liberated from self-clinging, it manifests as the brilliant clarity of mirror-like wisdom. In general, it has to do with knowledge and visual perception. In Tibetan tantra, this energy is symbolized by a diamond sceptre known as a vajra which is also the mythic thunderbolt weapon of Indra. The qualities of this energy are clear and pure as a faultless diamond, sharp, infinitely hard, and indestructible.

This is the wisdom energy most closely related to intellect at its best, although it can also go far beyond conventional intellect by transcending concepts, perceiving phenomena as they exist without concepts, while also maintaining a kind of freedom to play with
In this way, it is the energy of insight when one has a glimpse beyond one's own habitual way of seeing as well as beyond the conventions of the 'consensus reality' of a given culture.

Since one aspect of this wisdom energy is the kind of intelligence most closely related to intellect, it is therefore the wisdom energy most recognized, appreciated and cultivated in our schools and universities. This is the style of intelligence typified by lawyers and debaters who choose sides, refine their logic and then argue their points with precision and clarity. It is also the dispassionate and objective clear thinking of science and mathematics, for it is involved with seeing things clearly and then forming abstract theories as to the logical relationships between things. This energy tends to define things, distinguish differences, and delineate boundaries between dissimilar things in order to simplify and clarify the complex muddle of experience. Both in its constricted, neurotic manifestation and as a non-dual wisdom this energy seems to bring a sense of order out of chaos. It is the energy of critical thinking, systematic analysis, linear logic, rational discourse, and most methods which underlie our culture of science and technology.

Imagine being in the mountains on a clear and extremely cold morning in the middle of winter. The air is crystal clear, the sky is a brilliant blue and the ground is covered in snow so white and glistening that it seems to be light itself. Everything is frozen in a different and intriguing way, icicles hang from the rocks and trees, everything is hard-edged and sharply in focus. There is no disorder or chaos here. Everything is in its place. The landscape is vast and open, yet filled with sharp contrasts, with no hidden corners as every detail is available to the eye's inspection. This picture evokes the qualities of experience said to be associated with the raw energy of the water element. Perceptually, this wisdom energy is related to the eyes and seeing clearly.

The radiant light of clear insight does not distort what it sees but reflects it in all its accuracy and detail. When seeing the phenomenal world through the lenses of this elemental energy it is vivid and sharp with clean edges between things. The piercing
intensity of this vividness can be irritating to the eyes of ego. But when there is no reference point of a self, this crystal, vivid quality is unobstructed and detailed knowledge of inherent structures and patterns becomes self-evident.

The water element associated with this quality of mind is clear and fluid. Water can flow over a flat surface, completely covering it, yet remain transparent. In the same way, mirror-like wisdom is all-pervasive, clearly reflecting in mind the vastness and detail of phenomena.

Water can also be turbulent and dangerous, like rapids in a roaring torrential river, or, like a tidal wave, can smash buildings of a coastal city and then rip out the leftover rubble in the undercurrents. This represents the destructive potential of anger, while the cloudy and frothy opaque quality of the turbulent water might be seen to symbolize the psychological defensiveness and justification that accompanies anger. Contrast this with a completely clear and deep pool, still as glass, that perfectly reflects whatever is in front of it. This represents the precision and unbiased purity of reflection that is mirror-like wisdom.

People who perceive, reflect, abstract and react to life predominantly from this perspective generally tend to need to keep their distance from things in order to maintain a clear and precise perspective. Such people are most concerned, or perhaps preoccupied and even obsessed, with knowing and understanding things in an intellectual manner. They seem to derive a feeling of security from having an intellectual interpretation for everything, like a map to orient them within the chaos that is life. In order to construct this abstract interpretation, they need to maintain distance to have an objective viewpoint and to investigate all the angles and possible ramifications. They have a passion for orienting themselves within the larger picture. They must get to know the set-up first, and then they can function within it.

People who most frequently engage this energy of the water element love to look from high places onto broad vistas where they can perceive the lay of the land. They like
maps, guidebooks and clear instructions that simplify complex procedures. They might also like to observe the behaviour patterns of animals from behind the glass or bars at a zoo, or through a microscope in the laboratory. For that matter, as psychologists they would enjoy watching human behaviour through a one-way mirror or on film so that there is no danger of becoming caught up in what is happening and thus losing their pristine objectivity.

When someone who is operating from this perspective cannot step back to form an objective opinion on things, when they cannot formulate a clear and precise abstract conceptual understanding about what is happening, they tend to become irritated. When they feel that everything in their world is too close or intimately interconnected they become upset and confused by the apparent disorder and seemingly random bombardment of sensory stimuli and the vague, undefined impressions. If they experience this irritation for very long they may tend to feel claustrophobic and need to push their world away or defend themselves against what they perceive as the oppressive force of chaos. When the claustrophobia builds and there is no relief, they become defensive, angry and aggressive.

The fear of chaos and disorder can cause a person to defend those conceptual structures which they perceive as essential, even if these structures are no longer valid or helpful. Some people will defend with anger and violence a system of thought even when it has become harmful to themselves and to others.

The practice of drawing boundaries, setting up categories and formulating concepts is useful. Yet if we cling to these boundaries, categories and concepts when they are threatened by a changing world or, more significantly, by changes in the sophistication of our own ability to perceive, we become neurotic and defensive, aggressively attempting to fit an unyielding reality into our limited frames of reference. Individuals as well as nation states go to war to defend their physical boundaries, ethnic and cultural purity, or cherished religious dogmas.
This energy of anger maintains the same qualities of sharpness, clarity and precision inherent in mirror-like wisdom, as the two states of mind are manifestations of the same raw energy of the water element. Just as the water in the raging torrent is the same water as in the still, reflecting pond, so the mental energy of anger and clarity are the same. What is different is that in the case of anger, the energy of clarity has been commandeered by a little egotistical dictator who is afraid and defensive. This little dictator is the dualistic misapprehension which we call the self or ego. If we try to possess the natural clarity of mind, the energy becomes constricted and perverted.

We have all experienced how a sudden burst of anger often brings clarity to a situation. When we feel the energy of anger in our body there is a certain quality of onepointedness. We feel as if the cobwebs have been cleared away and any of the distracting irritations that cluttered our mind are temporarily banished. We develop a quick wit, become sarcastic, and have an amazing memory for long lost details that give our argument credibility and which cut our opponent down to size by putting him or her on the defensive. The speed at which we can anticipate our opponent’s strategy and weakness when angered truly amazes us. For when angry, our mind can be as sharp as a tack even if usually we feel dull and slow.

The above description we might call hot anger that moves fast like the turbulence of boiling water and scalds its opponent. Another kind of anger is cold anger that freezes our opponent out. This is often the situation when people are ‘not speaking to one another.’ This is a slower moving and longer lasting variety of anger; frozen in judgement, it shuts down communication. With a distinctly unfriendly coldness or a cool, unsociable glare that intimidates outsiders and drives them away, this style of aggression sets up both a physical and emotional distance.

This distance is what the person consciously or unconsciously craves. For as we have seen, the person who prefers this mode of awareness does not want anything or anyone to get too close. Once the appropriate distance is again established, then this style of
mind can apply intellect again and curiosity is aroused. This style of curiosity has its own subtle kind of aggression. If we cling to our conceptual framework, it begins to distort the clarity of our perception. We are not willing to see things that do not fit into our preconceived structures, and what we do see is distorted, wrapped in concepts, and pigeon-holed to fit in with preconceived ideas. The influence of the medical model and psychometric testing in education (Sodhi, 1974) is an example of this kind of thinking.

Whether or not a teacher is indoctrinated into the culture of diagnosis or not, if their tendency is to try to pin down exactly who a student is and how he or she learns, this will eventually blind them to subtle changes and idiosyncratic patterns of growth and learning. Any system of differentiating between personality types or cognitive styles such as the ones presented here can become reified and thus cause more harm than good. Even without using a specific system, teachers will often observe students through the lens of their own self-created sets of conceptual criteria.

Using a simplified structure or criteria to organize their perceptions of others, some teachers will notice and keep track of all the mistakes and imperfections of their students. They tend to be critical, judgmental, opinionated and quick to find fault with others. They can be impatient with bumblers and often cannot understand why others do not pay attention to all the pertinent details in the same way they do. It is easy for these clear-seeing-type teachers to become preoccupied with right and wrong. They tend to polarize situations, seeing either black or white. Because they see so clearly and organize what they see with such precise and ordered logic, their view is always very convincing. In fact, they are especially good at convincing themselves that they are right, and can be loathe to admit when their view is slightly off or distorted, narrow, or not the whole picture. Once they have sized up a situation, it becomes what they say it is, and other ways of expressing the same situation can be characterized by them as ‘not well thought out,’ ‘soft-headed,’ ‘unclear.’
Judgemental people can have a very fertile imagination. They can imagine how perfect the world might be if everything were structured properly, with supreme order and good sense, the way they might do it if given the chance. They can imagine utopias, but whenever they look around themselves all they see is incompetence, bungling and chaos. They create a mental world that loses contact with reality. They can expect the world and other people to be like their mental image and when these are not they can become irritated, impatient and angry. Even if they are more disciplined and less impulsive there is a subtle aggression in the way they insist on seeing the world through the lens of their own conceptual framework, instead of seeing it the way it is, which constantly slips through the nets of concept and category.

The academic approach is frequently guilty of this same kind of subtle aggression. Just as a clever lawyer can bend the truth by selecting the facts and arranging them in a convincing manner, academic writers can be prejudiced by ideas and theories, local biases and dogmas. Then, either consciously or unconsciously, they sift through the facts to prove their point. In fact, any time we use words or concepts to describe reality we are guilty of this subtle aggression because words and concepts can never describe the fluid, constantly shifting quality of experience or the complex web of infinite causes that restructure reality from moment to moment. Words and concepts are nonetheless useful, and the subtle aggression is removed if we fully acknowledge their limitations and acknowledge the playful quality involved in making up descriptions of our world.

Teachers who tend to this style seek to master space through cool logic and clear thinking. They want space to be sharply defined. They want clear and firm boundaries, but then, somehow, they are tricked by their own need for boundaries. For when they realize that the boundaries have become solid and real, they feel hemmed in and claustrophobic. They feel that the barrier is oppressing them and entrapping them. Then they need more space; they need to step back and get a better perspective.
This kind of alternation of the need for space, on the one hand, and the need for structure and boundaries on the other can recycle over and over. This can manifest in a positive way, as when a person is willing to let go of old cherished structures and boundaries to explore new perspectives creatively, exploring ever more sophisticated and subtle structures and patterns. Conversely, it can recycle in a negative way if a person is not willing to part with ideas that are no longer appropriate or useful. In the latter case, the cycle can go on repeating itself over and over, creating an ever increasing sense of frustration, fear, claustrophobia and anger. Buddhist psychology refers to this state of mind as a hell realm where suffering breeds anger which breeds suffering and more anger, ad infinitum.

The basic emotional pattern in the hell realm is one of pushing away or freezing out experience because it is too sharp and piercing. The response of a vulnerable ego is to turn the piercing wisdom energy of mirror-like wisdom into aggression. This confused relationship between ego and the piercing energy of wisdom may build up in an oscillation between the two or in a simultaneous fashion. When one experiences a brief gap in the self-conscious struggle of ego's panic to survive, the piercing precision of mirror-like wisdom creates a kind of shock wave that the reference point of self interprets as a threat, and it immediately prepares to defend itself. It is the brilliance and cutting quality of the clarity itself which cuts through ego's mirage of duality, yet when it is interpreted as aggression, ego feels a need to send out an equal amount of aggression as an attempt to push back the intensity of the world, including other people.

This struggle to secure a sense of territory heightens further the boundaries, which further feeds the feelings of being oppressed, as well as feelings of isolation. The aggression builds, tit-for-tat. Every time one puts out an aggressive response into the world it comes back with equal force. Hell realm is a world that has become completely claustrophobic, totally walled in, guarded and frozen up with aggression. Like an animal backed into a corner, lashing out at anything that moves, a being in the hell realm expects to be
attacked simply because its back is against the wall of its own making. As the aggression builds and builds, the subject becomes more and more convinced that the problem is coming from outside. Violent attacks to destroy what is mistakenly perceived as this outside source of the problem just increase the feelings of claustrophobia and pressure. Finally, if one kills another to try to rid oneself of the mounting anger, it brings no relief but rather a kind of haunting field of aggression begins to surround one. The total environment is filled with aggression and one cannot tell where it will strike out next or who is killing whom.

The aggression of the hell realm causes perception to be distorted in very bizarre and extremely painful ways. There are numerous descriptions of hells in the classical Buddhist texts such as Gampopa's *Jewel Ornament of Liberation*. These hells are described in quite a literal fashion. The terrible tortures are symbolic portraits of how the dualistic perversion of the raw energy of the water element causes one to attack oneself. There are images of both burning hot hells and frozen hells, hells of repeated physical torture where the subjects are tortured to death only to be revived again by an icy wind and made ready for further torture. They all have the qualities of intense struggle and entrapment with no escape. What follows is a brief description from the above mentioned text by Gampopa:

*Rab.tutsha ba* Tib. (Pratapana, sk. Intense Heating Hell) is so called, because beings there are tormented in a very special way. When they have been burnt with molten metal so that no skin is left and while fire flames from the nine openings of the body, they are pierced through with three-spiked weapons from the anus and the soles of the feet to the head and shoulders.

Some are boiled in a Burning stream of molten bronze,
Others are impaled
On red-hot thorny iron stakes.⁸

The florid state of psychosis can be seen as a type of hell realm in all its intense mental claustrophobia and suffering.⁹ In my experience of working with psychotic persons
over the past twelve years, I have found that more often than not they are possessed of uncan
ny insight and precise intelligence. For example, I worked with one young man who could list all my faults, weaknesses, and subtle tendencies to manipulate him with a kind of razor-sharp awareness, picking up on things in me that neither I or my supervisor could have noted or expressed as clearly. Being possessed of such vivid, sharp and accurate insight can be very threatening. The accuracy of this kind of mind, the cool precision of mirror-like wisdom, can be like the scalpel of a surgeon. It can be experienced as too sharp and cutting, so that all too frequently it causes harm. It takes a lot of practice to learn to wield such sharp intelligence with compassion.

Because there is a self-conscious centre or ego, the duality sets up an echo, reverberation chamber, or hall of mirrors. In this way, the self regards the precise and sharp quality of mind as a threat, and then the neutral quality of the wisdom energy can become an overly critical and demeaning voice like that described in transactional analysis (Berne, 1964, 1974; Woollams & Brown, 1978) as the internalized 'critical parent.'

The nagging, critical voice even begins to anticipate your failures before they arrive, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy of gloom and doom. The more one fights back, trying to escape the terrible voice, the more it begins to feed on this same aggression that is trying to block it out. Podvoll (1990) comments and summarizes from the autobiographical writings of John Perceval, a Victorian English aristocratic son of a prime minister who went insane while trying to pursue an ecstatic religious conversion:

On entering the realm of Hell he experienced the full fury of his own projections. He could not tell if he was committing acts of destruction or creation. His speed of mind was tremendous and in a constant momentum of change between giving birth and dying. He was given to feelings of hatred and of being hated, and, while, fighting against the projections, he began to strike inward. Voices now ordered him to destroy himself. When the “crack” occurred he was at a peak point of being overwhelmed, alternately burning or being frozen in an environment of terror. (p. 36)
The relentless voice inside of one’s head notices one’s every imperfection and every minute mistake. This heightens the self-consciousness, which further heightens the reverberating sense of aggression, and the critical voice increases in its interior discursive volume and may now seem like a vicious nightmare. For example, the person I referred to above who had sharp insight was plagued by the voice of God, persecuting and condemning him sometimes for his every move and every thought. The worst part about this kind of hell is that it seems that there is no escape from the cruel voice inside your own mind. The only escape is through making friends with the voice itself, making friends with one’s own aggression and with the fear of that aggression. Healing happens when all the parts within oneself are acknowledged, accepted and given a place within one’s own mandala of being.  

In order to fully engage the energy of mirror-like wisdom and release the constricted, aggressive approach to the raw energy of the water element, there is a process of discovery or a journey of awareness that needs to unfold. By heightening one’s awareness through contemplative practice one begins to perceive more subtle levels of suffering caused by the need to distance oneself from the world in order to give it distinct form, understand it and analyze it. By looking directly at the process of constructing a self, we experience the tendency to split off or divide our selves from our ongoing perceptions. Gradually, a softer, non-aggressive approach naturally develops and we become more willing to see things as they are. By making friends with the inherent energy of constantly giving birth to ourselves as separate from our perceptions, which is the elemental quality of water, we no longer need to identify with one side of the split versus the other. In this way, we become more sensitive to our environment, and any attempt to stand outside that environment and manipulate that environment becomes more and more obvious.  

Eventually, a very fluid and spontaneous wisdom is cultivated as one realizes that all knowledge is relative and that clear perception of each passing situation is the best tool for understanding the present moment. Mirror-like wisdom sees clearly whatever is in front
of it without bias, judgement, or the aggressive need to change it into something else. This wisdom energy then becomes the intelligence that manifests as a breakthrough in science or new and creative insights of any kind when a new level of clarity shatters through rigidified concepts in an iconoclastic break from personal habit or cultural tradition.

The religious symbolism of water as a cosmic birthplace of gods and living beings and the use of water to symbolize dissolution of form, and the sudden rebirth into a fresh and pristine awareness, evident in baptism and abhisheka, corresponds to this aspect of water as the birthplace of insight. By allowing the raw energy of the water element to flow within one’s psychophysical experience without trying to possess it or manipulate it, there is a continuous rebirth into a fresh and vivid world. In this constant rebirth the rigid lenses of preconceptions are continually being washed away from one’s eyes. In Buddhist tantra, this constant awakening to experience in a fresh way is referred to as ‘the dawn of Vajrasattva.’

There is also a quality of gentleness and softness to this wisdom energy, like someone who can hold a snowflake and examine it in every detail with such gentleness that it stays intact and never melts. In a similar way, this mirror-like wisdom allows one to see so clearly and understand so well the structure of things that one would never violate those delicate structures but regards them with respect and awe as sacred.

This is reminiscent of some scientists who have spent their lives carefully observing and noting detail upon detail. This discipline of paying close attention to perception and making ever finer distinctions as one comes to know the phenomena being observed is a systematic way of uncovering the wisdom energy of the vajra family. In this way, through patience and careful attention to detail, the temporary obscuration of aggression is purified into wisdom.

This form of intelligence also comes to bear within the subtle art of diplomacy and conflict resolution. The wise peacemaker sees clearly the causes of conflict, redefines or does away with rigid boundaries and fixed positions that entrench each party, and thus
transforms the aggressive energy used to defend that position into a new way of understanding which is more inclusive. These skills of conflict resolution and wise diplomacy are always useful in the classroom.\textsuperscript{11}

If teachers in their training have the opportunity to exaggerate their styles in a living and breathing way, through space awareness and meditation practice, and reflect on their experience in the intimate sharing of group process, they can experience their own particular way of being critical, conceptual, judgmental, and aggressive. Normally, when such behaviours are more subtle, defensive mechanisms allow us to deny the extent to which our neurotic tendencies control our day-to-day communications with others. By using techniques that exaggerate these neurotic tendencies, a teacher in training might be able to cut through some of the denial and observe a deeper part of his or her psychological make-up. If teachers in training are able to look at what they see within themselves directly and then relax with the intensity of that emotional experience, further resources of mirror-like wisdom energy become available.

Many teachers are blessed with the talents of being able to structure information in a clear and orderly fashion. However, when they believe that their way is the only way, they can frustrate the development of similar strengths in their students. If they are not able to let go of their preconceptions, they are not willing to learn from their students how they might organize their own perceptions.

If a teacher judges a student, that student will feel judged and will often fulfill whatever positive or negative expectations that teacher has. If a teacher clings to concepts concerning specific students, labels them, and pigeon-holes them into convenient categories, they will miss the freshness and spontaneity that forms the essence of how each individual child learns. On the other hand, if a teacher practices the art of mirror-like wisdom seeing each child freshly in each new moment with profound respect and gentleness, the inner resources of the child are free to develop without inhibition.
CHAPTER 17 NOTES

1. Ywahoo (1987), a contemporary Native American woman of the Etowah band of the Eastern Tsalagi (Cherokee), a teacher and holder of an ancestral wisdom lineage known to go back for twenty-seven generations, speaks of a similar archetypal spirit energy: 'From the East arises Ama Aghcya, Water Woman, bearing the gift of knowing, the east wind inspiring the mind to see, “I am that I am” (p. 133).

2. My descriptions of the elemental wisdoms that follow in this and the next four chapters are based on a variety of sources, beginning primarily with Trungpa (1973, 1976) as well as some unpublished transcripts of talks given by Trungpa. Also, several senior students of Trungpa taught this material at the Naropa Institute and at the maitri space awareness retreats. In particular I have relied upon my notes of talks given by Marvin Casper in 1981, 1982 and 1985, as well as some notes of talks given by Samten Nagarajan at a maitri retreat in 1984. Finally, the book Rainbow of Liberated Energy by Chogyam (1986) inspired me to trust in my own experience of the qualities and to write about them in my own way. This book also gave me the idea of using the elements as a way to bridge traditions of the East and West. Chogyam acknowledges his sources at the end of his book with a list of fifty or so Tibetan teachers and meditation masters with whom he studied during sojourns in India, Nepal and Tibet.

3. Arieti (1967), Flavell (1970), Bruner (1973) and Wilber (1980) all suggest that there are higher levels of cognition beyond our verbal conceptual way of thinking. Bergson (1949) understood that there is a 'pure perception' as part of his direct intuition, a perception that is cleansed of all limiting concepts and conventional thoughts. Husserl (1931) also describes a kind of immediate experiential awareness as transcending verbally structured consciousness. Wilber (1980) quotes from Aurobindo: 'By an utilization of the inner senses -- that is to say, of the sense powers, in themselves, in their purely ... subtle activity... we are able to take cognition of sense experiences, of appearances and images of things other than those that belong to the organization of our material environment' (p. 60).

4. Though it is awkward to make comparisons between different systems of learning styles or personality types, it may be useful to note that in some ways the vajra style has similarities to the melancholic temperament, to Jung's thinking types (intellectually directed), to McCarthy's (1980) type two analytic learners, and to what Keirsey and Bates (1978) label as the Promethean spirit of science bent on the prediction, explanation and control of nature, finding order in the universe and analyzing patterns in search of repetition, and regularity that can be depended upon. From the emotional perspective all of these tendencies seem to have their origin in an impatience with chaos or disorder and a strong need for form and structure as a way to re-assert, re-confirm duality. The classic depression of the melancholic temperament could be this subtle aggression of wanting to bring order and perfection directed inwards to become a consistently self-critical manner. Jung (1960) tells us that numbers and mathematical structures arise from the archetype of order as it surfaces from the collective unconscious becoming conscious. The wisdom of the vajra style may also be compared with the archetype of the Magician (see Moore & Gillette, 1990, and Pearson, 1991) which involves knowing, mastery over technology, and in general the role of teacher, mentor and 'ritual elder' who initiates others into the mysteries of whatever complex discipline, be it medicine, engineering, electronics, computers, astrophysics, psychology, acupuncture, yoga or shamanistic ritual and magic. Pearson says that 'the highest level of magic is consciously using the knowledge that everything is connected to everything else; developing mastery of the art of changing physical realities by first changing mental, emotional, and spiritual ones' (p. 205). For the most part this kind of magic has been forgotten within our materialistic culture as we have given over much of our power and our possibilities of personal magic to the reigning magicians of our time: doctors of science and medicine, the high priests of the physical and biological realms which seems to me a bit like putting all of our faith for eternal salvation in the hands of a good mechanic.

5. Trungpa (1973) uses descriptions of landscapes to evoke the qualities of each of the five elemental wisdoms, as does Chogyam (1986). I have borrowed from both of these and elaborated upon them in my own style.

6. Bergson's term 'patterned immobility' (1949, 1960) depicts well this tendency we all have to freeze reality into manageable chunks, like little ice cubes, in order to construct a sense of meaning out of the ever-changing flow of 'the perpetual happening.' The notion of meaning, a favourite topic of the existentialist philosophers and psychologists (Tillich, 1952; May, 1969, 1977, 1981; Becker 1973;
Binswanger, 1963; Laing, 1959, 1968) seems to have to do with intentionality and a self-actualized will, which implies a certain consciousness of the meaning-making process while it occurs and gives shape to each present moment. Liberated intellect seems to know in each instant that it creates the structures that set the limits to knowing and thus can choose them or refuse them, depending on what is most appropriate to the situation. From the ultimate view of pure perception, any tendency to make meaning is an abstraction or a past tense reflection: divorced from the flowing river of the present moment.

In a variation on the use of water imagery, DeBono (1990) looks at the inadequacies of our dominant thinking culture. He proclaims, in a manner reminiscent of the manifestos of Futurism, Dada, and Surrealism in Modern Art, what he calls the 'New Renaissance: from Rock Logic to Water Logic.' Based on an understanding of the brain as a self-organizing information system, his notion of water logic implies a kind of thinking that is highly dependent upon defined circumstances and conditions, the way water fits and flows with its terrain and unlike traditional 'rock logic,' which is circumstance independent. He says 'I am right – you are wrong' is a shorthand crystallization of the thinking habits that both formed the last Renaissance and were further developed by it. The search for truth – as distinct from dogma – was to be made through the exposure of falsity by means of argument, reason and logic. This reason, not dogma, was to decide what was right and what was wrong. Central to this type of thinking is the underlying notion of 'truth.' By means of argument which manoeuvres matters into a contradictory position, something can be shown to be false. Even if something is not completely false, the garbage has to be chipped away by the skilled exercise of critical thinking in order to lay bare the contained truth. In summary, our traditional thinking system is based on 'truth,' which is to be uncovered and checked by logic and argument (supplemented by statistics and other scientific methods). The result is a strong tendency towards negativity and attack. Negativity is seen to be a powerful way of uncovering the truth, resisting disturbing intrusions and giving a personal sense of satisfaction to the attacker. We need to shift from (this kind of) cleverness to wisdom. Perception is the basis of wisdom. We can always defend our existing thinking culture because, fundamentally, it is a particular belief system based on concepts of truth and logic. Every belief system sets up a framework of perception within which it cannot be attacked. The arrogance of logic means that if we have a logically impeccable argument then we must be right – 'I am right – you are wrong' (see pp. 3, 6, 7, 26, 27).

Gampopa as translated by Guenther (1975), p. 58. According to Guenther, notions of life in the hell realms have stimulated Tibetan writers to greater and greater heights of gory detail. This obsession, perhaps similar to the contemporary North American fascination with gruesome and violent films or the gruesome portrayal in the paintings of the 15th-century Flemish Renaissance painter Hieronymus Bosch, can actually have a powerful teaching effect. Although such descriptions flourished in part to motivate monks and lay people toward virtue and diligent meditation practice to avoid the intense sufferings of hell realms and samsara, in general they also have another more hidden or less obvious function. Religious devotees often have a tendency to deny their aggression, and thus it hides away unacknowledged. By evoking the energy of aggression and the nightmarish visions of intense suffering and fear with grotesque imagery, the hidden side of a virtuous person's nature, or what Jung refers to as the shadow, can be rooted out exposed and acknowledged. Furthermore, the more one opens to this energy in oneself, the more one is also able to learn to accommodate it in one's psychophysical system and relax with the intensity of it to transform it into wisdom. (See Kopp, 1988, for an excellent treatment of this issue from a clinical and literary perspective.)

The hell realm seems to have something in common with aspects of the melancholy temperament, especially in the tendency toward madness. The melancholy depression so commonly known throughout European culture since the Renaissance as a listless, intensely introverted and introspective, romantic and cosmic sadness has a hell realm quality which Kretschmer (1925) has associated with schizophrenia.

Making friends with oneself, the contemplative Buddhist approach to healing psychological suffering, is strikingly similar to the psychosynthesis teachings of A. Gioli (1965) and Ferrucci (1982). The conceptualization of the intrapsychic integration process is the same. The only difference seems to be the differing ways of using and understanding the term 'self.' Ferrucci tells us that 'The ultimate aim in subpersonality work is to increase the sense of self or center by deepening our acquaintance with our own subpersonalities so that instead of disintegrating into a myriad of subselves at war with each other, we can again be one' (p. 53). Likewise, the ego state therapy and reparenting
work of Transactional Analysis (Schiff, 1969), rediscussion work of Goulding (1982), and inner child approach of Whitfield (1987) and Bradshaw (1990) all work with the same principles of identifying split-off parts, accepting them and reintegrating them into a more inclusive whole. Jung's process of individuation (see Jung, 1972) also implies the integration of various different unconscious complexes into a smoothly integrated whole. Jungian-based writer Jacobi (1959) refers to 'splinter psyches' which appear to the ego complex as external because they have been shut out by the ego as incompatible and have an autonomous life in the unconscious. Whereas many approaches follow Freud in identifying the root of such complexes, or what Assagioli calls 'subpersonalities,' in an individual's own childhood Jung believed, in addition to this, that they are associated with universal archetypal themes which we all share as part of our collective unconscious.

For more on mediation and conflict resolution, a good place to start is with the art of negotiation (Fisher & Ury, 1991). Moore (1987) and Goldberg, Green and Sander (1992) cover practical strategies for mediation and dispute resolution. A lot has been written on conflict resolution in the classroom (see Bickmore, 1984; Drew, 1987; Fletcher, 1986; Isaac, 1991). Judson (1984) even has a section on cooperative games, For the Fun of It. Storey (1990) explores resolution of conflict between parents and schools. N.A.M.E., the National Association for Mediation in Education, of Amherst, Mass., has a bimonthly newsletter called The Fourth R (425 Amity Street, Amherst, Mass. 01002), and Jossey-Bass of San Francisco publishes the journal Mediation Quarterly.
The next light of elemental energy, said to shine out in the bardo of dharmata, is personified as the primordial Buddha deity known as Ratnasambhava, and is associated with the colour yellow and the subtle element of earth. When distorted, this energy manifests as a bloated sense of pride or a deflated sense of inadequacy, which are simply two sides of the same coin. When freed from the confines of a small-minded reference point of self, this energy manifests as the wisdom of equanimity, a peaceful and panoramic awareness which sees the value in all things. This wisdom has a sense of contentment, richness, boundless resources and unending generosity. In Tibetan tantra, this energy is symbolized by a wish-fulfilling jewel, rinchen in Tibetan or ratna in Sanskrit. It is also called to mind by the rich qualities of gold, amber, saffron and butter.

Imagine that you have been invited to a farm for Thanksgiving dinner. It is mid-morning on a perfect fall day. The golden sun is warm on your face, yet there is a pleasant crispness to the air. Endless rows of huge, fluffy, white clouds populate the sky and float gently over rolling hills of orange yellow and red. As you walk down a country road towards the farm, you are aware of an endless symphony of smells. There is the thick and
slightly pungent smell of wet and mouldy leaves just beginning to decompose. This blends with the more acrid smell of manure, the smell of fresh-cut hay, and the simple smell of muddy water in the puddles on the road. As you come closer to your destination, you smell the grain that is still being poured into the huge silo, then you smell the pigs and the chickens. As you approach the house, you smell the turkey roasting, as well as steaming vegetables, broccoli, turnips, onions in a cream sauce, squash and yams, then the yeasty smell of bread baking, chestnuts and almonds roasting, the sweet smell of pumpkin pie and the spicy scent of cinnamon, tart apples, and a rich buttery crust.

On the porch of the farmhouse, a large, ruddy-faced man with hands as large and rough as the branches of a tree hands you a giant mug of extra strong, golden, homemade ale. He pats you on the back and introduces you to the myriad of family, friends and members of the local community. As you sip your beer, you begin to melt into the homey atmosphere. You smile, and your heart begins to glow with warmth and friendliness. As you meet the folk and make small talk, you notice that each of them is a character with his or her own peculiar qualities and charm that endear you to each and every one for very different reasons. The ritual of the meal takes many hours, and when you have finished with the long parade of textures and tastes you are satiated and content, without a worry in the world. Then there is a night of music, dancing, jokes and story-telling that extends into the wee hours of the morning.

Experiencing the world with an open mind through the perspective of this energy, which is like golden honey drenched in sunlight, you feel unconditionally rich. Even if you have very little by conventional standards, you stand firmly on the earth, secure in trusting your own resourcefulness, and are aware of endless resources around you. With this firm security, you are not miserly but generous, giving freely to others of your time, money, energy, your friendship and whatever you might have that they might need.

This is the wisdom energy of mothers who nurture their babies; feeding them, burping them, clothing them, bathing them, singing softly to them, playing with them,
listening to them cry, and taking care of their every need. It is the wisdom that sees the value in all experiences. It is the wisdom energy of acceptance, accommodation and non-judgemental caring. It is the wisdom of healing, nursing and caring for the sick and needy. It is the wisdom of knowing how to be the ideal host or hostess who does not smother his or her guests in oppressive generosity, yet nonetheless remains completely aware of their every need and offers sumptuous pleasures, each in turn, with perfect timing. Before you even ask, you are offered a comfortable seat in a richly decorated and inviting environment, then: food, drink, music, lively conversation, good friendship, a warm fire, peace and quiet, an interesting book, a comfortable bed, a good night’s rest, a warm bath and clean, dry towel.¹

This is the wisdom of those people who may have very little, but make the best of what they do have. Some people have an uncanny resourcefulness. If they are missing a tool, they find a way to combine old pieces of junk to get the job done. This kind of creative vision comes from being able to see the inherent value and potentiality in all things and not being rigidly fixed to conventional concepts and linear logic.

This is the earthy wisdom of a farmer who intuitively knows the value and danger of the elements. Such a farmer attunes his senses to signs in the natural world. He knows how to read the shapes of clouds to predict the changing weather. He knows the optimum time to pick the fruit, based on colour, texture, taste and smell. He identifies with his crops and hears them call out for water in the dry wind of a drought or knows that the soil lacks a certain nutrient by the way it smells.²

This wisdom energy of the earth element, this warmth, richness and generosity, is rarely recognized, appreciated or cultivated in our schools, unless it is so strong within the nature of a particular teacher that it cannot be suppressed. In general, schools do not acknowledge this style of awareness as part of education. Why should such an essential part of being human not be included in the development of children?³
Successful schools seem to foster a sense of community where older students as well as teachers look after the well-being of the younger students. The Waldorf schools, a widely respected holistic system of education founded by Rudolf Steiner, a German visionary of the first part of the century, puts a great deal of effort into nurturing this wisdom energy, as well as others neglected in the conventional educational system. For example, a Waldorf teacher will follow his or her students through their entire twelve years of education in order to nurture a warm relationship of trust and an emotional bond that allows learning to unfold deeply within the child.

The earthy qualities of this wisdom energy may seem more at home within the intuitive mode; however, they are just as likely to manifest through the intellect. Those scholars who have vast stores of memory drawn from a wide range of knowledge are tapping into the intellectual aspect of this wisdom. They might tend to lapse into long and entertaining anecdotes, seemingly tangential, yet ultimately relevant in a poetic sort of way. Likewise, this energy is evident in those who know history so well, from their vast studies, that they teach it with such appreciation for detail and the tone of the times that you would swear that they had been there participating, observing, and taking notes.

Although the arts sparkle with various aspects of all of these five styles of wisdom energy, the wealth and richness of culture owes much to the wisdom energy of the earth element. The ancient crafts traditionally associated with the earth goddesses, such as pottery, basketry, weaving, any art associated with the cultivation of plants and the care of animals, as well as the culinary arts of good food and wine, all engage the energy of this earthy wisdom. The Dionysian element in myth and literature also has the qualities of this energy, as do epic novels that chronicle the rise and fall of families, nations and cultures. The operas of Richard Wagner are examples of this all-encompassing and gloriously expressed earthy energy.

 Whereas the crystal clear energy of vajra distinguishes differences and picks things apart, the wisdom energy of ratna perceives and appreciates the sameness of things and
sees a vast vision of the whole process. For example, one can appreciate the quality of each season in turn. From this perspective, life is seen as an adventure or journey where each experience is tasted, chewed and fully digested; whether joyful or sad, painful or pleasurable, each is appreciated as it is, on its own merits. Every experience, whether dull or exciting, is a learning experience. It is all good food that can be converted into useful energy. These experiences may not confirm one’s self in the particular way that one might have hoped for, nonetheless, from the vaster perspective of the wisdom of equanimity, it all seems equally valid and worthwhile. There is a certain security and stability in this, like the solidity of earth.

The earth is large and bountiful and does not discriminate between those inhabitants that live out their lives on its surface. It does not accept or reject those who are dependent on it. It simply gives forth everything that sustains life. An earthquake, however, can destroy in seconds what human beings have laboured to build for generations. This, perhaps, can serve as a metaphor for the destructive energy of pride, which is the distorted energy of the earth element.

We might ask what quality of this earth wisdom could possibly be so terrifying as to frighten us away from its pure intensity and yearn for the muted light. For it seems that to become one with the powerful stability and abundant fertility of the earth could only prove to be a solid and expansive experience without anxiety, like that of the Buddha himself seated beneath the bodhi tree, gesturing to the earth as his only witness to enlightenment. Perhaps it is this very power of joining forces with the earth, threatening to annihilate our sense of self, that seems to flip this energy of richness into one of poverty and inadequacy.

Low self-esteem and feelings of inadequacy are pervasive in our culture which is so divorced from any natural connection with the earth. Such feelings of inadequacy are the driving force behind compulsive addictive behaviours, which also seem to dominate the lives of an increasing number of people in our consumer-driven, materialistic culture.
Theodore Roszak (1993) develops an ecopsychology based on this notion that our deepest repression is the voice of the earth within us.

From the dualistic perspective of a reified separate self, the power and richness of earth is projected outside oneself as separate, which causes one to feel disassociated from it and consequently very small, worthless, poor and empty. This way of feeling is described in Tibetan Buddhist language as the hungry ghost realm.

According to the text of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, if someone cowers in fear or feels overwhelmed by the great yellow light of the purified element of earth and the wisdom of equanimity, then they gravitate toward the softer light or more familiar experience of greed, hunger and an insatiable grasping. This psychological experience is known as the realm of the hungry ghosts. In Tibetan *thanka* paintings and in ghost stories, the hungry ghosts are portrayed iconographically as having vast stomachs thought to be as wide and bottomless as an empty ocean, while their throats are long and thin and their mouths are as tiny as a pinhole. Because they can never ingest enough food to fill their gaping bellies, they are condemned to endless hunger, never able to satisfy their ravenous appetites.

In human experience, this realm is characterized by a feeling of poverty and a need to be filled up. Here the wisdom energy of equanimity, an even-natured contentment and unbiased earthy richness, is manipulated by ego’s self-consciousness, creating a state of panic that flips it into a contradictory mind-set that is at once bloated with a sense of pride and deflated by a sense of inadequacy. The pride is really nothing more than a mask hiding the frightened, dependent, needy and unfulfilled little child inside.

The empty and hollow feeling of this energy is really an accurate awareness of the emptiness of self. If we attempt to draw psychological energy and resources from the empty well of this non-existent self instead of the vast store of energy and resources available through our connection with the earth, and all the other elemental energies of the
environment around us, we will obviously feel empty, poverty-stricken, needy and hungry.

No amount of external gratification can take away this empty and hungry feeling. If such a person is able to amass a fortune and expand his influence over a vast area including persons, places and material objects, the feeling of richness and expansiveness is somehow very hollow and never really satisfies. There is a continual yearning. The tendency, then, is to become obsessed with the constant process of acquiring. Whether it be material objects, knowledge, or experience, there is an insatiable craving for more and more.

In this frame of mind, we cannot stay in the present to appreciate what we have, for as soon as we possess what we have desired, we lose interest in it. A simple, everyday example of this is our relationship to food, the earthy substance which maintains our body. Just as most of us have a difficult time sitting still and quiet on the earth like the Buddha, for similar reasons we also have a difficult time slowing down enough to properly ingest and digest our food. While having breakfast this morning, with my first taste of strawberries on my cereal for the season, I caught myself in a kind of frantic frenzy, feeling that I couldn’t shovel it in fast enough. Having ‘woken up’ to this hungry ghost mentality, I attempted to slow down and appreciate my food. However, I noticed that in less than a second after putting a delectable spoonful into my mouth, it lost its appeal entirely. After the first bite when the tartness of the strawberry bursts forth, the utilitarian process of chewing further loses any appeal as the mouthful becomes ground up into a tasteless mush. The next bite, already on the end of my spoon, entices my attention away from my mouth, throat and stomach, and I again feel that surge of energy which yearns for satisfaction. This tendency to crave, grasp and blindly devour food, as well as other kinds of experiences, comes up over and over in the Buddhist teachings. For example, in the Hinayana Abhidharma teachings on pratityasamupada or ‘dependent origination,’ two of the twelve nidanas or ‘interdependent arisings’ in the Wheel of Life, the eighth nidana, known as trsna or ‘craving,’ and the ninth nidana, upadana or ‘grasping,’ are considered to be crucial
aspects of the entrapment process to recognize if one wishes to cut the chain link of causes and effects that perpetuate the suffering of samsara. What follows is a contemporary explanation of these two nidanas:

In link eight, we experience the overt presence of painful habitual patterns in the form of trsna, craving, expressed as a chubby man greedily slurping a sweet drink of milk and honey. This connotes self-indulgence, a tendency to react to the feelings exposed in the previous link, even if this reaction is ultimately destructive. From the Buddhist point of view, it is ultimately destructive to react impulsively to egocentred demands. Nevertheless, we gobble down the drink in a manner reminiscent of the habit-bound tendencies of the blind grandmother in the first link.

The ninth link extends the impulsiveness of number eight into full-blown emotionalism. It is called upandana or grasping, which refers to intensified desire. Here, a man climbs trees laden with fruit and eats voraciously, gathering additional fruits to carry with him. The sweet drink was merely an hors d’oeuvre. The emotion has reached its peak, and indulgence is fully exposed. The grasping is not merely sensual, it is also intellectual and aesthetic; it emanates from egocentrism. (Simmer-Brown, 1987, p. 27)

The fascination in this realm seems to be more with the process of gathering, collecting, acquiring, and even hoarding than one of enjoyment. As the need to acquire further intensifies, the acquiring itself becomes the drug. The feeling of futility is overwhelming, as the process never seems to actually work or bring any satisfaction. After a time, a nihilistic attitude sets in, and everything in the world seems utterly worthless like so much junk. This syndrome is well expressed in the Greek myth of King Midas who turns his family into lifeless statues with his golden touch.

The self-important, bloated quality of arrogance hides a desperate sense of psychological poverty, insecurity, or inadequacy. Picture a fat, rich and powerful business tycoon who is always shouting orders to his harem of frantic secretaries. He makes deals that bankrupt other companies and puts thousands of people out of work. He exploits the
laborers of underdeveloped countries and pollutes the environment where other people live, while surrounding himself in ostentatious and gaudy luxury. He arrogantly explains, 'I deserve it, because I have earned it,' always with extra emphasis on the word 'I.' Furthermore, he may believe that the lot in life for others is to serve him and suffer the consequences of his never-ending thirst for power, richness, fame, glory and accomplishment. This may be an unfair and even inhuman caricature, for any real person would experience at least brief moments of doubting the solidity of his view, yet the portrait nonetheless conveys the all-pervasive and convincing internal logic of a full-blown realm.6

The diverse psychological problems that stem from dependency can all be seen as neurotic manifestations of this energy of the earth element. Whether it is dependency on another human being or dependency on alcohol, drugs, food, cyclical and habitual behaviours, or the dependency of having someone else be dependent on you – now widely known as co-dependency – all of these are caused by the anxiety or fear of one’s own insubstantiality.7 Feeling insubstantial, we hunger and grope for something solid and dependable outside us that will take that feeling away. We are always seeking reassurance from our world and desperately looking for feedback from 'out there' that will confirm us and give us a sense of solidity 'in here.'

I once spent the night caring for a friend, a dying poet who was simultaneously addicted to amphetamines and alcohol. His body was so ravaged by a lifetime of using every possible drug he could get his hands on that, though once tall and strong, he weighed less than one hundred pounds and walked hunched and haltingly with a cane. Through the night he drunkenly told me the story of his desperate and miserable life with a keen wit, descriptive and earthy language, and piquant irony, while I cleaned up the remains of his regurgitated dinner, held his hand and listened. The life of a hungry ghost is surely not pleasant, though it may be human.
The false sense of self quakes in the fear of its own hollow insubstantiality and seeks to bolster itself up with materialistic security. There are different levels of materialism with which one might try to shore up a defense against such feelings of insecurity. Trungpa (1973) refers to these as the Three Lords of Materialism.

There is the desire for material objects; those who want the biggest car, the biggest house, or collectors who hoard the finest wines, the finest art, etc. There is the inexhaustible hunger for power, prestige, and status, the desire for fame, the desire to be cheered by all, admired, loved, appreciated. Then there is the accumulation of knowledge: scholars who chew their way through endless stacks of books trying to accumulate enough knowledge so that they will eventually feel complete, substantial, important and secure. Finally, there is the subtle materialism of psychological sophistication and the pride of spiritual attainment which can so bloat someone with arrogance that they completely shut out the world with their self-satisfied smugness. All of these attempts to shore up the false self eventually fail, and the driving sense of poverty and insecurity remains like an insatiable, gnawing hunger.

This fear of our insubstantiality is natural, considering our dogged belief in a permanent and continuously existing self. On some level, we are aware that this self is ultimately an insubstantial illusion and that our earthly manifestation as a body will eventually die and decompose. Because we cling to the illusion of a self, we are terribly frightened by this truth. However, by confronting the fear directly and relaxing into the wisdom of the earth element, we can let go into a vaster sense of security. If we are dependent on the fickle conditions of reality to provide us with a sense of security, we will only be tossed about like a tiny boat on a stormy sea. But if we have a vaster vision of the fluctuations of phenomena and trust in the rooted, earthy, and endlessly resourceful aspect of our awareness, we can manifest as solid as a mountain that effortlessly accommodates forests, waterfalls, even glaciers, and provides for a myriad of creatures, both great and small.
The ability to relate to positive and negative feedback is essential for teachers if they expect to grow and develop their teaching skills. Arrogance in a teacher sets up a barrier to communication and further learning. An arrogant teacher models arrogance to his or her students, as a way of coping with the stresses of school life, and thus casts a shadow over the joy of learning. On the other hand, if teachers are plagued by feelings of inadequacy children are very quick to pick up on this and exploit it, resulting in discipline problems and disaster in the classroom. Remaining open to feedback, yet sustaining a deeply grounded sense of unconditional confidence is not easy. Where in conventional teacher training programs do teachers learn the skills that will help them to relate to their own feelings so they develop this basic wisdom of the earth element?

If teachers were to regard their work as the unfolding of a contemplative journey, they would be encouraged to respect their personal feelings and thus develop their vast store of inner resources and gentle confidence. By doing this, they would be more sensitive to the ups and downs of their students as they struggle on their own journey. If teachers cultivate their inner confidence and sense of resourcefulness, they can perceive endless opportunities for learning in the world around them. Thus, they do not need to depend so heavily on the highly structured curricula, textbooks and teachers’ manuals filled with someone else’s inspirations. If they are confident to follow their own personal inspirations, they can enrich the classroom environment and enliven it with their own love for learning, which will no doubt become contagious. Learning to cultivate their own sense of inherent richness, they will intuitively know how to bring out the richness in the hearts and minds of their students.
CHAPTER 18 NOTES

1 Discussing the sixteen types which Jung (1923) first developed and which have been popularized by the scientific psychological approach of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Myers, 1980; Myers & McCaulley, 1985; McCaulley, 1981), Kroeger and Thuesen (1988) tell us that the hosts and hostesses of the world are Extroverted-Sensing-Feeling-Judgers (pp. 269-272). In general Jung's Feeling type, which he sets up as a polar opposite to his Thinking type, seems to be most easily associated with this earth energy of *rana*. Kroeger and Thuesen characterize the dichotomy between Thinkers and Feelers in this way:

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<th>Thinkers (T)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>Subjective</td>
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<tr>
<td>Firm-minded</td>
<td>Fair-hearted</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laws</td>
<td>Circumstances</td>
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<td>Firmness</td>
<td>Persuasion</td>
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<td>Just</td>
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<td>Clarity</td>
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<td>Detached</td>
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2 Many such descriptions of farmer wisdom can be found in the writings of Wendell Berry (1972, 1981, 1984, 1990). His numerous books and essays on culture and agriculture present a fairly comprehensive philosophy based on ecological principles that human nature must be defined within the context of geographical considerations, local ecosystems and regional variations in community culture. 'Local life is intimately dependent for its quality, but also for its continuance, upon local knowledge' (Berry, 1972, p. 67).

3 Perhaps home economics classes might cultivate a little earthy elemental wisdom, yet somehow a classroom kitchen seems to maintain more of a classroom feeling than a real kitchen feeling. Once, on a soccer trip in high school, I visited a private boarding school in Santa Barbara, California, where the students on work rota were responsible for the upkeep of their entire environment and for cooking and cleaning up after all of their meals. I was impressed. Now that environmentalism is popular, a certain amount of this earthy elemental wisdom can be uncovered on field trips in the country. One program recently described by Murray (1993) involves bringing children from four schools in and near Newburgh, New York into a 3,700-acre preserve known as Black Rock Forest. Using holistic and experiential approaches, this broad-ranging program has everything from one-day trips into the forest for grades three to six to what was called 'Classroom-In-The-Forest '92,' which took 24 grade seven students into the forest for every school day from April to June. Some first-hand accounts: "I saw a garter snake. It felt strong. It was very bumpy and coily" — Brian, a primary school student. "I remember a dead raccoon lying on the ground and after that we went into our house. And when we came back a few months later from that, the raccoon's skin was gone and only the tossed-up bones were there" — Solomon, primary school student. "I learned that if you want to enjoy nature more you have to be quiet, calm and basically just let your hearing and seeing senses do their job" — a Sherpa Program participant, North Junior High School (p. 49).

4 Keirsey and Bates (1978) associate Dionysius, the Greek god of wine and revelry, with Jung's Sensing and Perceiving types to bring attention to the preference for sensuality, impulsivity and a lack of striving toward goals. My use of the word 'Dionysian ,' however, has more to do with comparing an earthy Dionysian approach in the arts to a more refined Apollonian approach.

5 The novels *War and Peace* by Tolstoy (1966) and *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Garcia Marquez (1970) are two good examples.

6 The opposite of this arrogant, modern-day potentate and a magnificent characterization of the wisdom of the earth element is the Jungian archetype of the Ruler: King and Queen. Moore and Gillette (1991) remind us that Kings and Queens throughout history have always been sacred; however, it is not so much the mortal beings who fill the roles, but the archetype of rulership itself of which they serve in humility as earthly embodiments, that has the power to bring order to human society and bestow blessings of prosperity and fertility upon the land and the people. Pearson (1991) explains what the Ruler archetype has to do with our relationship with the earth element: 'The ruler is the reigning
archetype for this capacity to operate on the physical plane because rulers cannot be squeamish about
the realities of the ordinary material world. When the ruler archetype is active in our lives, we feel at
home in the physical world and in charge of ourselves. We enjoy the process of expressing who we are
in the physical domain of work, home, money, and possessions. And we have some confidence that we
know how to get our needs met’ (p. 183).

Of the endless stream of self-help books and clinical manuals dealing with the issues of addiction and
compulsive behaviours, I have four favourites that I most frequently recommend: (1) May (1988)
describes the process of attachment that leads to addiction, reviews the qualitative experiences of
addictions of all kinds, including not just substance abuse but addictions to sex, performance,
responsible and intimacy, and his view of healing, which is firmly rooted in traditional spirituality
as an experience of grace and empowerment. (2) Bailey (1990) is also rooted in a spiritual understanding
of addictions and draws from rational emotive therapy. It is based on the premise that our thoughts
control our reality and that different levels of consciousness are identified with various different levels
of emotional responses. By developing an understanding of how the mind works and identifying how
one tends to spin the web of one’s own delusions, one is led, in this approach, to find recovery and
serenity from within rather than as simply trading one dependency for another. (3) Elkin (1984) takes a
family systems approach to understanding how addictions involve interactions around the issues of
power and control within a social system and gives some valuable advice on how to interact with
alcoholism in the family and in the workplace. (4) Whitfield (1985) is a comprehensive manual for
understanding the transpersonal spirituality behind both the addiction and recovery processes.
Chapter 19
Padma: The Wisdom Energy of Fire

• A blossom from the muck • A sunset on the West Coast • Highly discriminating perception • Art • A symphony of colours • A tapestry of music and metaphor • Intuitive sense of the harmonious whole • An anomaly in the school system • Right and wrong answers distort the subtle truth • At worst, distracted and scattered • Daydreamer • Moody • Intense concentration, fusion and loss of boundaries • Reckless hedonism • An answer without proof calls for punishment • The dance of flirtation • Seductive, teasing, playful, coquettish • Wisdom of our social life • Fire in the loins • Human realm: alternation of pleasure and pain • A traffic jam of thought • ‘The lights go up’ in a manic episode • The utter aloneness in depression • Hollywood glamour • Light and heat = perception and compassion • More light = More heat •

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The bright red light of the purified element of fire that is said to shine from the heart centre of the primordial Buddha deity Amitabha in the bardo of dharmata is described as the wisdom of discriminating awareness. In its constricted form, this wisdom energy manifests as desire, passion, grasping, and the urge to possess. When liberated, this fiery emotion of passion transforms into compassion, which includes a precise, intuitive awareness of how to help others along in their own process of self-discovery.

The quality of experience or feeling tone of this subtle energy is symbolized by the elegant and voluptuous lotus flower, or padma in Sanskrit. The long stem of the lotus arises out of the filth and mud of swamps, opening into an immaculate and beautiful blossom. Therefore, it is often used in Indian traditions as a symbol of spiritual development and the path of transforming negative emotional energies into positive energies of compassion and wisdom.
The quality of this energy is also associated with the colour red. Red stands out from other colours. Red draws the attention of the eye and holds it. The wisdom energy of fire is also associated with the cardinal direction of the west, with springtime, with early evening and with the romantic and spectacular light of sunsets.

Imagine that you are on a gentle hillside on the Pacific West Coast in late May. You look out below across a crescent beach of beautiful golden sand to see the sun slowly slipping down between the sky and sea. You are surrounded by sweet-smelling wild flowers in an endless variety of colours—wild poppies, fireweed, Indian paintbrush, columbines, and many more. The sun becomes a luminous red ball on the horizon, while wispy clouds display shifting hues of violet, amber, turquoise and fiery orange. The water reflects this harmony of colours, while the sun bleeds into its depths a purple glow and draws a path of sparkling red along the surface. Waves dance in undulating folds and heave the shifting palette of colours to the shore, where they shatter into points of light and glittering seafoam. You drink in the experience and practically boil over with delight, yet you also feel a deep sadness that there is no one there to share the experience with you.

This wisdom energy of the fire element is the primary wisdom energy of poets and artists. It is the flame that illuminates their refined perception and delicate craft. The essence of a work of art, if I may be so bold, is that it communicates deeply personal yet universal human experience. This communication depends on arranging the elements in the composition in such a way that the magic of their complex system of relationships comes together as a whole that shines forth, evoking the appropriate experience in others. Such composition is not accomplished through linear logic or intellectual reasoning. It is the intuitive art of highly discriminating perception, practical skills, an eye for details, and a vast and playful imagination. It is a more concrete way of thinking that depends on perception more than concepts or ideas. A painter placing a colour beside another colour within the symphony of colours that make up a painting cannot be trapped by the concept of green or blue but must see the intensity of hue and shade in relationship to all the other
colours. Likewise, the poet cannot be trapped by conventional language habits, but must **transcend them** with subtle perception of sound and meaning to weave a tapestry of music and metaphor.\(^1\)

This intuitive wisdom with its subtle perceptual discriminations and simultaneous sense of a harmonious whole may be taught in the finest art, music and performing arts classes. However, this profound way of perceiving and thinking is generally ignored or regarded as an embellishment by most mainstream educational institutions.\(^2\) This is a tragedy, for every human being has the right to cultivate this wisdom potential within their awareness. Furthermore, there seems to be an idea embedded in our educational and academic culture that this type of thinking is only useful for artists and irrelevant to the rest of us. I believe that this is not true. Edward de Bono (1990) calls for a new way of thinking. Based on perception and principles of design, this more fluid thinking is responsive to relative circumstances. He believes it is superior to the rigid logic and critical thought which tends to dominate our existing thinking culture.

Very often, those who inhabit this style of being are an anomaly in the school system. Schools reward students who think in straight lines and students who organize their thoughts in a clear, rational and straightforward manner. This is no doubt good training, and sometimes appropriate. However, there are different ways of perceiving reality. If a child is tuned into finer perception of subtle discriminations which cannot be subjected to rational analysis but are processed in an emotional or feeling way, the typical school approach of right and wrong answers seems like a lie or a distortion of the truth. They begin to resent the fact that someone is telling them how they should regard their world. Meanwhile, the teacher becomes frustrated at the students' inability or unwillingness to accomplish what seem to be simple tasks. If a teacher does not give these students access to the means of expression that satisfy and compliment their style of perception, the gap in understanding between the teacher and these students grows wider, and the situation becomes worse as the students lose confidence in their own way of being,
perceiving and expressing. Soon they begin to believe that they are stupid and lazy, just as they have been told.

At its worst, this style of perceiving and thinking is continually distracted and scattered. These are the children, boys and girls, who cannot focus their mind on the task at hand. They continuously look out of the window, poke the child next to them or sink into the trance of daydreams. When they do pay attention and excitedly answer a question, their train of thought also becomes distracted. They will veer off into a disorganized description of what seem to be only vaguely related details. They may be passionate about expressing themselves, but their essays read more like the recounting of a dream than the appropriate fulfilment of their assignment.

They can also tend to be moody; excited and engaged one day, dull, despondent and depressed the next. They can cultivate a feeling of being cut off from their world. They can feel misunderstood and confused, trapped in a world that is alien to them. However, if you ask them to write a poem, paint a picture, or play a rôle to express their feelings and their insights, their energy soars and their attention is riveted to their project with an unparalleled power of concentration.

The ability to concentrate in this style can be as highly refined and intense as the concentration of a portrait painter or musician. However, it can just as easily degenerate into a kind of obsessive fixation. The neurotic energy of passion tends to cling to something with little awareness for other things that occur in the space around it. This is like the trance of a couple so in love that they are oblivious to their surroundings. This kind of narrow-minded fixation can occur in response to any kind of object, whether it is a material possession, like a car or a house, or an object of mind, such as a project or an idea. There is such complete fusion with the object of desire that there is no appropriate sense of boundaries or greater awareness. Reckless hedonism is also an aspect of this style. Living for pleasure and intensity, or living for the moment, this type can become
preoccupied and blinded by what is right in front of them, having no awareness of future needs or the needs of others around them.

Often people who tend to operate from the perspective of the wisdom of the fire energy have highly developed intuition. They know things without knowing why they know them or how they know them. Their intuitive hunches and feelings about things are right on target. When they have become top salespeople, successful investors, artists, designers, therapists, actors and musicians no one cares if they can’t go through the step-by-step analysis of how they came to their conclusions. But schools do not regard this kind of intuition as sufficient. Intuitive students are punished and made to feel stupid if they can’t go through the accepted methods of problem-solving and analysis which they themselves see as pointless busy work. To them it makes no sense. They say, “Why should I bother to go back and fiddle with all those tedious arguments when I already have the answer I need and my mind is naturally and inescapably drawn ahead to newer and more exciting challenges?”

Among these challenges, the most enticing, and in some ways the most rewarding, is the challenge of social interaction and interpersonal relationships. The energy of the fire element, more than any of the others, has to do with people and relationships. The intrigue, the gossip, the intimacy, the highs of love, the lows of rejection, the dance of flirtation, all are aspects of the living experience of this fire energy. It is the energy involved in sensuality and sexual attraction. There is a seductive quality to this energy, and it can be very excitable, teasing, playful and coquettish.³

Most educators realize that with hormones running wild in junior high and high school adolescents, school subjects will never win out in a competition with the primary importance of social life and the allure of sex. If we turn the problem upside down, however, we might ask: Why can’t an intelligent and informed educational approach to social life, sexuality and relationships be included as an important learning experience in school, rather than seeing it merely as a major cause of distraction? Junior high and high
school students, in my opinion, can easily grapple with social and psychological issues that are normally not taught until university or graduate school, if they are taught at all. If the way a teacher teaches and the specific curriculum used allows for lots of social interaction, discussion and debate, a good teacher can also model appropriate and gentle interactive skills, while teaching about interpersonal relationships and emotions.

Well-trained teachers should be able to spot social and psychological problems and work with them, or refer a student to counselling, before the problem greatly interferes with learning, or worse, drags the student down into depression, anger, and self-hatred. Beyond helping just those who are in trouble, why should teachers not serve as wise elders who pass on their experience of the joys and sorrows, trials and lessons of interpersonal relationships? If teachers were trained in a more contemplative fashion, they might have more insight into their own experience and respect it as a valuable asset in teaching. Considering this possibility, let us look further into the link between the neurotic confusion and compassionate wisdom of the fire energy.

Ancient love poems, as well as the lyrics of contemporary popular songs, are filled with images like burning love, flames of desire and the hot fires of passion. The emotional heat of this energy and the bodily sensations associated with sexual arousal have long been associated with fire. Fire consumes its fuel, taking its very existence from that which it consumes. This is like the emotional fire of grasping and possessiveness, the confused, self-centred and neurotic approach to the fire energy. Neurotic passion reaches out to grasp and cling to the object of its passion in a desperate attempt to confirm a sense of self. Let us look a little more deeply into the background and causes of this neurotic grasping.

Believing in the illusion of an independently existing and separate self causes a continuously underlying anxiety, or vague feelings of loneliness and separation. This is similar to the sense of alienation referred to in existential philosophy and psychology. For most of us, this anxiety is intolerable, and we do our best to ignore it, disguise it, push it away, or run away from it. Often we disguise it or re-channel its energy into what we have
seen Wilber (1980) refer to as substitute gratifications. Neurotic passion is one of these. The anxiety and sense of separation is redirected by the false self into an intense yearning to merge or unite with whatever is seen as other or outside the self in attempt to recover the peaceful unity that seems to have been lost.5

For example, when we are driven by neurotic passion, we feel an intense yearning to merge with our lover in ecstatic sexual bliss. This may be achieved for an instant, but it soon passes, leaving ourselves and our lovers as separate human beings, again confronted with aloneness. We are never able to accomplish our goal of union in the way that we conceive of it. Thus, experience within the realm of this energy is characterized by the alternation of pleasure and pain, or yearning, satisfaction, dissatisfaction, and further yearning in endlessly repeating cycles. This realm of existence is known in the Buddha dharma as the human realm. Of the six neurotic realms that relate to the five wisdom energies, it is said that beings in the human realm are the most open to learning and to embarking upon a path of discipline toward further development. This openness seems to have to do with a reflective awareness that erupts in the midst of an alternation between experiences of pleasure and experiences of pain, which engender a yearning to escape the overall pain of this cycle.

Living in the human realm, we are preoccupied with passion. We feel somehow always disconnected from the sources that we imagine will bring us happiness. Our minds are constantly scheming for a way to arrange the situation so that our experience will be pleasurable and perfect. I remember sitting beside a mountain trail in a lush green meadow speckled with wildflowers on a cool and fresh, yet sunny, bright spring day, when a woman came trotting up the trail with her partner and said to him, 'Some day we'll find the perfect spot.' For a minute, I had thought that I had found it, but like her, I found myself itching also to 'get on up the trail' to investigate what was around the bend or what the view was like on the other side of that next rise.
There is a lot of mental activity in the human realm. There is a sense of being driven by your thoughts and fantasies. There are thoughts, more thoughts, and counter thoughts as you vacillate and can’t make up your mind. The refined ability to discriminate results in a style of fussiness and selectivity, like that of a person ordering in a restaurant who changes his or her order two or three times, and then explains to the waiter exactly what to tell the cook about how to prepare the meal and how he or she likes this dish with such-and-such on the side instead of what is usually served with it, because the flavours go together better, etc. This is also true in the area of intellectual pursuits of knowledge learning and education, wherein a person’s mind is cluttered with all the various viewpoints and possibilities that he or she has drawn together and with the interrelationships between them, as well as the ideas about how to implement them. ‘The epitome of the human realm,’ says Chögyam Trungpa (1976), ‘is to be stuck in a huge traffic jam of discursive thought. You are so busy thinking that you cannot learn anything at all’ (p. 31).

The human realm also has a romantic tendency toward nostalgia for the past, on the one hand or lofty ambitions and high ideals for the future on the other. There is a strong sense of one’s individuality, having one’s own ideology and unique ways of doing things. From this point of view, a person might demand to have things done his own idiosyncratic way. At their worst, people of this style tend to discriminate against others merely on the basis of taste and aesthetics.

Similar to the desire and grasping in the hungry ghost realm where there is no satisfaction but at times a feeling of revulsion, in the human realm there is a vacillation between passion and a dullness, flatness or indifference. In cycles of various duration the mind in the human realm is preoccupied with hope and fear. There is a kind of reaching to the stars, excitedly extending the imagination, and then, a sobering realization of the limits of reality, of suffering, and of anxiety. And each time one faces the facts again and wakes up to the ordinary limits of a situation, that seems to be the cue to escape again with further heights of reverie. I myself have experienced this kind of revving up of the engines of
excitement with fantasies of some grandiose future possibility. I feed off it for a time, then finally realize that it is perhaps impossible, or just a meaningless dream that would not bring happiness, I fall to a flat and apathetic state, looking for some new excitement over the next horizon. This kind of vacillation between desire and indifference is characterized most strongly in the experience of someone suffering from what is known in psychiatric circles as ‘bi-polar affective disorder,’ or more commonly, as cycles of mania and depression.

Writing of his personal experiences in *Adventure into the Unconscious*, John Coustone, an English gentleman who experienced his first manic episode towards the end of the Second World War while working as an intelligence officer, describes his feelings and bodily sensations at the onset of a manic episode:

This began ... with the usual curious changes in sense-perception of the outer world. I can only describe it by saying that 'the lights go up' as if a kind of switch were turned on in my psycho-physical system. Everything seems different, somehow brighter and clearer. This is, of course the phenomenon technically known as 'photism'; it is quite easily recognizable and bitter experience has taught me that as soon as it occurs, I should take immediate steps to go to the hospital, since within a few days I shall be out of control. This time, however, I had no intention of going near the doctors.⁶

During this particular episode, Coustone had gone back to his beloved Berlin, where he had lived some twenty years before, with the intent of following through with his mania to its highest degree. With all of his senses enhanced and his mental speed increasing, he had visions and experiences that he labelled as synchronicity, by which 'he meant events in which the contents of his thoughts were instantly manifested in reality' (Podvoll, 1990, p. 85). Finally, after having a profound vision, he journeyed home. Then after another brief trip to meet and spend some time with C. G. Jung, he descended from his manic episode into depression. Podvoll (1990) summarizes this phase of Coustone’s experience:
The omniscient-like clarity of madness switched into a feeling of perpetual fog and darkness. All the illuminated sensations of mania were gone; in their place were dullness and disgust. Rather than being able to think quickly and have everything “click into place”, depression was an inextricable jumble. He felt ignorant, indifferent and could not concentrate. The grandeur and power of mania were replaced by their very opposites; just as in mania he sought to save the world, in depression he felt ultimately responsible for all the evil and sin affecting mankind…. Without fail Coustance said he “learned more” from the experience with depression than he did from mania. Only in depression could he feel, to the bone, his utter aloneness in the universe. He said it was the most shocking insight of his life. The contrasting creations of the worlds of mania and depression revealed to him the utter unreality of everything in the mind, and how each world or private universe, or any world, insane or sane, is a hollow fabrication of the mind. This woke him up. Always, this realization was for him a turning point in coming out of depression and was the moment when recovery began. (pp. 92-93)

We have all experienced that strange, anti-climactic drop in passionate excitement, or a sense of emotional emptiness that can occur when we finally possess the object we have long desired. Once we possess what we have been obsessed with, we often neglect it. Then it is only the consuming fire of passion that matters. We can become addicted to the emotional intensity and must keep the fires of passion burning as an end in itself. Thus, we are driven to constantly seek out and burn more fuel. We desire a faster, more luxurious car, newer, finer, and more fashionable clothes, the perfect house, or most tragically, the perfect lover and the ideal relationship. We consume and consume like a raging forest fire, drawing the life energy out of whatever lies before us and leaving behind us a path of devastation. Our overflowing landfills and garbage dumps graphically illustrate this principle operating in our materialistic, consumer-driven economy.

People who manifest the distorted fire energy are always looking for something new and different to maintain the fever pitch of their excitement. What they fear is monotony, boredom, loneliness, and empty space. They are romantics who live life to the
hilt. Exaggerating the agony and ecstasy of life, they see themselves as the hero in the 

drama of their own life. If they do not experience enough intensity in their own life, they 
are drawn to seek it out vicariously through their ever-widening and all important circle of 
friends, through gossip, or through entertainment.

In general, we in North America are addicted to entertainment. The exaggerated and 
glitzy symbol of Hollywood perfectly represents the qualities of the distorted fire energy. 
The superficial glamour that is only skin-deep, an illusion of make-up, special lights, 
cameras, clever writers, actors, and special effects captivates our minds, holding our 
attention riveted to the screen.

We tend to need music wherever we go – in our homes, our cars, our offices, at 
restaurants, and grocery stores, and even when we walk, ride a bike, or exercise. We 
watch TV and videos; we go to movies, concerts and sporting events. This constant barrage 
of music and other entertainment wards off boredom, distracts us, and maintains a 
superficial level of emotional and mental discursiveness. Ultimately, it keeps us from 
feeling anxiety and that sense of alienation. If we can touch these feelings, uncomfortable 
as they may be, we can find the energy source of inner wisdom, and self-discovery. If we 
can accommodate our feelings of alienation and make friends with loneliness, we can 
connect with others in a genuine way that does not use them as entertainment to ward off 
these feelings or as fuel for our consuming passion.

Just as an appropriately contained fire gives heat and light, the liberated wisdom 
energy of the fire element has two components: the heat of compassion and the brightly 
illuminated perception of discriminating awareness wisdom. Transforming the fire of 
passion into the fire of compassion begins with maitri, learning to love oneself. On the 
contemplative journey we meet up with our own worst enemy, our beast within, and learn 
to love him, forgive him, nurture him, and work with him. Having done this with 
ourselves, we are ready to work at loving others.
The fuel for our fire of compassion is empathy. In Buddhist contemplative psychotherapy, empathy is trained directly by exercising it in meditation practice. In this practice, empathy is referred to as exchange which means, among other things, exchanging oneself for another, taking on the suffering of another, suffering-with (the literal meaning of the Latin root word for compassion). Exchange is the natural ability to feel what others feel, whether positive or negative, to open to the whole experience of another without losing the wisdom of a broader perspective at the same time.

As we have seen, there is a natural exchange of elemental energies happening all the time between ourselves and our environment, between ourselves and our students, between ourselves and our families, our friends, our world. Normally we have endless psychological defense mechanisms to ward off the elemental energy (anxiety) that we experience in the intimacy of simply being with another person. Contemplative practice is a powerful way to discipline one’s mind to open up space for another to enter. This balanced and yet burning state of mind is developed through a meditation practice known as sending and taking.8

As we have seen, when the energy of the fire element is distorted by the confusion of clinging to a false self, one wishes to merge with others, unaware of the underlying union that already exists. The true union is wrapped in paradox; it is union in diversity. Only through refining perceptual discrimination of the manifest diversity does an appreciation for the underlying unity become apparent. Only when we can settle with our aloneness and the unique characteristics of our individuality do we honestly sense our deeply underlying unity with others.9 Thus the two, compassion and discriminating awareness wisdom, are inseparable. By liberating the passionate intensity of the fire element within, one’s perception is transformed, becoming brilliant and vivid like flickering fire-light. With this vivid perception, one begins to fall in love with every detail and every nuance of the phenomenal world, giving rise to further heat, further caring, further compassion.
In order to fully exchange with their students, teachers must first experience them completely as they are, without bias, and without desire to change them. Like an artist who sees and appreciates the subtle textures, light, and shadow in a landscape, a teacher must see the shifting moods and subtle idiosyncratic qualities of each student and appreciate them as they are. Through this discriminating awareness, a natural bond of mutual respect and appreciation develops that allows for a more intimate and satisfying level of communication.

In therapy, healing and development occurs in the context of relationship. Good therapists know how to perceive their clients in a way that helps them to kindle their own fire, and fan the blaze to liberate their own energy for growth and healing. Because the therapist has learned how to transform the power of immature emotionality and passionate fixations into mature wisdom, it becomes possible to create an environment wherein the client can freely explore repressed emotions. The skilful therapist will engage the client in a playful relationship which liberates these seemingly negative energies, while at the same time revealing their positive attributes. For therapists, the number one priority, therefore, is to do their own emotional work, so as to have no hidden fears or deeply repressed elemental energies which might inhibit the process of exchange. Is there any reason why this should not also be the highest priority in the training of teachers?

Genuine and heartfelt communication is the hallmark of the wisdom energy of fire. True communication between teacher and student does not mean that there is always peace and harmony. On the contrary, differences of opinion, struggles, rebelliousness, and conflict are what put good communication to the test. The neurotic approach is to avoid conflict and ignore differences at whatever cost because there is a fear of losing contact. The result is a superficial relationship based on half-truths, lies and meaningless communication designed to maintain the veneer of friendliness.

If teachers do this, they deny their students the right to discover themselves as independent, thinking individuals. Teachers skilled in honest communication will honour
conflict and respect rebellion in their students and use this dramatic energy to draw out of each student their own wisdom and best qualities. Only if the teachers themselves are not afraid to play with the warmth and brilliance of the fire energy will the students feel invited to enter into the dance of communication that liberates the wisdom of their own blazing fire.
CHAPTER 19 NOTES

1. The daily use of art, in the broadest sense including all forms of creative expression, as an integrated part of the curriculum for teaching all subjects (McCarthy, 1980), I believe, would be a natural outgrowth of a contemplative teacher training program. Artistic expression, to my mind, is the essence of education rather than some adjunct discipline. The psychology of art and art in education is a vast topic in itself. A classic for understanding the role of art in Jungian psychology is Neumann (1959) and a classic for art as education is Richards (1962). The works of Franck (1973, 1993) present the contemplative approach of Zen to seeing and drawing. 'Right brain' theories have inspired Edwards (1979) and Capaccione (1988) to develop methods to access our hidden talents as artists. And recently, a great many artists, therapists and authors have come out with both practical and theoretical books on art as a royal road to the unconscious, uncovering there a natural capacity for healing, growth and wholeness. Adamson (1984) presents a beautifully illustrated guide to art therapy. London (1989) tells us how to explore art as an instrument to awaken the powers of the original self underneath conditioning. Fincher (1991) extends the Jungian practice of drawing mandalas as a path toward wholeness. Steward and Kent (1992) and Diaz (1992) both present a series of projects and exercises designed to cut away preconceptions, fears, self-consciousness and the inner critic to help students manifest their own creative spirit and integrate artistic expression into everyday life. Drawing upon shamanistic healing traditions, McNiff (1992) explains how engaging in the process of making art, performance art as well as visual art, becomes what he calls 'medicine for the soul.' And Audette (1993) writes an artist's guide for overcoming blockages to the creative process. Sometimes I find that all I need to become like a child again is to pick up a crayon and draw.

2. The sanguine temperament (Harwood, 1958; Littauer, 1983), childlike in its wide-eyed innocence, emotional, demonstrative, enthusiastic, expressive, dramatic, charming and inspiring is similar in these qualities to the padma style and the human realm. Students feeling this fire energy are similar to McCarthy's (1980) 'type one: imaginative learners,' those with the 'Apollonian temperament' (Keirsey & Bates 1978) and Jung's 'Intuitive and Feeling types' (Jung, 1923; Kroeger & Thuesen, 1988). All of these value intuition and insight thinking, intimacy in relationships, authenticity and self-realization. McCarthy says they work for harmony, they need to be personally involved, they seek meaning, and tend to ask the question: 'why?' All of these various classifications identify a type whose primary sphere of involvement is the world of social relationships. They are people who tend to perceive broad patterns in an intuitive, instantaneous manner without extensive use of logic or reason. They know things without knowing how they know them and have little patience for analyzing things by breaking them down into isolated parts. Although they are highly sensitive to detail, it is always details within the context of the whole, and they are loathe to separate details from the Gestalt. Characterized by spontaneity and a creative flare, people with Apollonian and sanguine temperaments are not too keen on planning ahead because they live more in the present moment without so much reference to a linear extension of time (Keirsey & Bates, 1978).

3. The discriminating awareness wisdom of the fire element seems to have its roots in sexuality and in the games and rituals of attracting a mate. In describing the 'Apollonian temperament' and those who share Jung's 'Intuitive' and 'Feeling' traits, Keirsey and Bates (1978, p. 63) quote from Ashe (1969, p. 13) who writes about this wisdom as manifested in her character Gillian: 'The major quality was something reactive, a chameleon quality that somehow enabled her to transform herself in the eyes of any man. She could become - and she had felt the process often enough to know its validity - pale of skin, full breasted, intellectual, sexy, aloof. She could be whatever the man happened to be looking for that moment. She could become any man's dream woman, and somehow accomplish it without relinquishing her own identity.... It was a process of becoming. It existed not in mechanical tricks but in an acute sensitivity; it took place not in her physical alterations but in the eye of the beholder.' D. H. Lawrence (1953) tells us that 'sex and beauty are inseparable, like life and consciousness. And the intelligence which goes with sex and beauty, and arises out of sex and beauty, is intuition' (from 'Sex versus Loveliness').

4. The Jungian archetype of the lover also has many similarities to the qualities that I am discussing in reference to the subtle element of fire. Moore and Gillette (1991) discuss this archetypal reference in male development and identify two poles of the lover shadow as the addicted lover and the impotent lover. Though we have identified addiction with the energy of the earth element, it is easy to see that it can also be the result of the passion in the fire element. Moore and Gillette speak of the Don Juan
syndrome as identifying men who, fragmented within, search for wholeness unsuccessfully through an endless stream of female partners. The Impotent lover on the other shadow pole represses passion, becoming depressed and literally impotent. The mature lover, according to Moore and Gillette, is deeply sensual, compassionate, mystical, poetic, artistic and intuitive to the point of becoming psychic.

Moore and Gillette (1991) relate this psycho-spiritual problem with idolatry and put it this way: ‘For the addict, the world presents itself as tantalizing fragments of a lost whole. Caught in the foreground, he can’t see the underlying background. Caught in the “myriad of forms” as the Hindus say, he can’t find the Oneness that would bring him calm and stability.... The addicted lover unconsciously invests the finite fragments of his experience with the power of the unity, which he can never experience.’

Coustance (1952), quoted in Podvoll (1990), p. 78.

Pearson (1991) alludes to the story of ‘The Beauty and the Beast’ in reference to the Lover archetype’s journey of self-acceptance. She says that to make friends with our beast, our ‘shadow’ ‘means forgiving ourselves simply as a matter of habit.’ Furthermore, bringing us one step closer to compassion, she says, ‘It also means forgiving others, since what we are very often most critical of in them is a shadow projection from within ourselves’ (p. 159). This emphasizes the fact that, since there is ultimately no real boundary between self and other, the contemplative way is both an inward and an outward journey simultaneously.

For a detailed description of this practice and others leading up to it see Kongtrul (1978) and Chodron (1994).

Pearson (1991), speaking in Jungian terms, says something similar in reference to the highest level of the lover archetype which involves 'radical self-acceptance giving birth to the Self and connecting the personal with the transpersonal, the individual with the collective.'

Paraphrasing Hillman (1972), who explains that a ‘therapist’s job is simply to love the client and be present, not needing a particular outcome,’ Pearson (1991) tells us that ‘While therapists cannot force themselves to feel love for a client, if they are present and empathic, love will descend, as Castillejo (1990) says, as “grace,” and then that love can heal’ (p. 159).
Chapter 20
Karma: The Wisdom Energy of Wind

- Action
- Energy to do
- Green-eyed monster
- Life springs forth to prey upon itself
- Joyful activity versus chaos
- Juggling
- In touch with the pulse
- Power
- The inner peace of martial arts
- Environment, mind, body, and action all smoothly joined
- Teacher as classroom warrior
- Desynchronization leads to paranoia
- Jealous god realm
- Othello, Macbeth and the Godfather
- Humourless
- Thriving on panic
- Workaholism
- Procrastination and indecision
- Teachers need benevolent power, effortless effort, skilful means

As the bardo text reads:

O son of Noble Family, Listen without distraction. On the fifth day, a green light, the purified element of air, will shine, and at the same time Blessed Amoghasiddhi, lord of the circle will appear before you from the green northern realm, Accumulated Actions. (Freemantle & Trungpa, p. 48)

Known as the wisdom of all-accomplishing action, this wisdom energy has to do with bringing the power of unconditioned mind directly to bear on the situations of daily life. This is the psychological energy that gets things done. The colour green evokes the quality of this wisdom energy of wind, as does the buzzing, blooming profusion of activity and growth that happens in the spring and early summer. In its constricted form, it becomes the self-conscious emotional experiences of envy, jealousy, and paranoia, which can ultimately lead to the abuse of power and terrible acts of aggression. We speak of being green with envy; and Shakespeare's Othello refers to jealousy as the 'green-eyed monster.'

The most basic meaning of the Sanskrit word karma is 'action,' and in this usage, as a title for the buddha family related to the air element, it refers to activity.¹ This activity from the wisdom perspective is enlightened Buddha activity, while from the neurotic
perspective, it refers to the confused activity that originates from our clinging to the false belief in an ego.

When this energy is liberated from the constricted self-conscious approach, it can be directed outward as a positive force to work for the benefit of self and others. Just as a gust of wind sweeping down over the land touches everything in its path, this wisdom energy accomplishes whatever needs to be accomplished and fulfills whatever needs to be fulfilled. The liberated energy of the wind element is free from hesitation and excessive deliberation. It is simple and direct, pure appropriate action. ²

Imagine that you are in a mountain meadow in the north country in June or early July. The tundra is soft and spongy under your feet. At a closer look it appears to be a veritable explosion of life. There are dozens of different types of grasses, as well as mosses and other ground coverings in every conceivable shade of green, sprouting forth and competing for a hold on the precious bits of available soil. This is complemented by a plethora of tiny, brightly coloured wildflowers that seem to be popping up right before your eyes. Even the vivid, multi-coloured lichens covering the rocks seem to vibrate with life. Everywhere, the air is filled with the frenetic buzzing of tiny insects of many different species, as well as the larger ones like dragonflies and mosquito hawks that prey upon the smaller. The ground, too, is covered with crawling insects foraging for plant food as well as eating one another. Little mice and shrews and moles scamper about in the grass, while higher up the screech of marmots echoes in the rocks and hawks circle high above the meadow waiting to strike. Below in the pine forest, the calls of crows and jays join the chattering of squirrels and chipmunks. As evening comes, more bugs arise from the marshes, and spiders stir to collect their hard-earned catch. Fish jump from pools in the stream, feeding. And finally, as the sky darkens further, it is filled with the fluttering wings of bats also feasting on the insects.

This energy of profuse activity is often observed in elementary classrooms. An outside observer can often note easily whether the activity in a classroom is unfolding in a
healthy, productive and positive direction, or if it is ‘out of control,’ chaotic, dissonant, and troubling. Small children seem to thrive on activity, especially when it is spontaneous and playful. There are those educators and thinkers who would say that children, when left on their own to explore their spontaneous activity and inherent curiosity, will learn whatever it is that they need to learn. On the other hand, there still seems to be a need for containment, guidance and modeling, so that children can learn the ways of self-discipline. The manner in which a teacher responds to the inherently healthy activity of children will for the most part, determine whether or not that activity will tend to go in a positive direction of diverse self-directed learning or whether it will degenerate into the chaos and confusion that necessitate rigid discipline and external control. Furthermore, as with all the other elemental energies, the way that a teacher regards and works with her own energy of activity will directly influence the way she teaches and encourages her students.

One way to talk about the psychological tone of the wind energy might be to describe it as a dichotomy between a self-conscious need to control, on the one hand, and the enjoyment of spontaneous, healthy activity within a strong container, on the other. Let us first look at the wisdom side of appropriate containment and the enjoyment of spontaneous and healthy activity, and secondly, at the emotional confusion behind the need to dominate and control. Being clear and firm about boundaries is as essential to a teacher as it is to any leader. The wisdom of the wind element has to do with fearlessly protecting the appropriate boundaries of a particular classroom activity. If a teacher is uneasy with the wind element energy and afraid to use it appropriately, students will sense the teacher’s fear and take advantage of the situation in any way they can. Yet if the teacher simply has a presence of strength and power, augmented by a keen awareness, this creates a natural container which students will not even question. This container gives the students a feeling of safety and allows them to explore within that particular boundary a wide range of spontaneous and healthy learning activities.
Teachers who work freely with this wisdom energy never give up in the face of adversity, but rather become more inspired and energized by greater and greater challenges. They have the ability to remove obstacles and are wise in knowing how to overcome the tricks and cunning of egocentric and negative forces in any situation, whether these come from within themselves or from their students. They are the people who maintain a cheerful disposition even in the midst of a crisis, or when seemingly burdened by an inhumane workload and totally packed schedule. They seem to take on one challenge after another within the blink of an eye. Their timing is impeccable, they always seem to be in the right place at the right time and they never hesitate to extend themselves to another’s aid. They are always organized and prepared, making sure that they have whatever it is they need to accomplish the task at hand. They always deal with one thing at a time, despite the fact that it appears that they are juggling sixteen different things at once.

Like a juggler, they deal with each thing that comes at them thoroughly and properly without worrying about what has just passed, or what is about to come. That is not to say that they are ignorant of the larger picture. On the contrary, their intuition is highly attuned, and their awareness is all-pervasive, picking up on any movement or significant change within a three-hundred-and-sixty degree radius that includes patterns from the past and the potentials in the future, as well as the structure and texture of energy in the present. However, they are not obsessed with the meaning of these perceptions, nor do they feel weighed down by what they know. Rather, they maintain a light and airy disposition, and like the trade winds that move large ships, they use the force of what they know in a focused and well-directed manner. They seem to be in touch with the pulse of every situation and with the rhythm of activity itself. They understand how to pace a project, when to lie back, and when to pour on the steam.

Few people demonstrate these almost miraculous abilities consistently. However, it is easy to recognize that some people are more accomplished in this wisdom of action than
others. Abraham Maslow’s (1971) category of Self-Actualization brings to mind many of these same personality traits of skilful action.

The psychological quality of this energy has to do with power. In the West, we have developed a deep-rooted cynicism concerning the corruption of power. People tend to use power to their own advantage. Lord Acton’s famous words: ‘Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely’ seems to be an ingrained axiom in our culture. Nevertheless, the appropriate use of benevolent power is an essential aspect of true wisdom. What good is the wisdom of knowing something if there is no power to make things happen that will somehow bring benefit to oneself and others?

Related in many ways to the archetype of the warrior, a useful analogy that can help convey the essence of this wisdom energy of action is to imagine a highly accomplished martial artist taking on a team of trained fighters. Such a highly skilled warrior works from a deep inner place of peace, stillness and quiet. When attacked by violent energy, he or she is immediately in touch with that energy and accustomed to feelings of fear. By riding the feelings of fear, such a person is able to accurately assess the quality, direction and power in the energy of the attacker, and he or she is able to redirect the original aggressive energy back at the attacker with the slightest movement. Through vigilant awareness and highly tuned senses, the peaceful warrior effortlessly defeats aggression by reflecting it back on the attacker.

Such an approach is used by Richard Heckler, a master of the Japanese martial art _aikido_ and founder of the Lomi school of body-oriented psychotherapy. He describes working with aggressive male adolescents in a juvenile detention home. His approach is to directly make contact with the aggression of these young men. This is not done without fear, yet Heckler explains that through the mutual experience of fear a strong bond is set up between himself and his most difficult students, and they are then encouraged to embark upon a path of discipline and self-discovery.
This example illustrates that the wisdom of action ideally comes from a place of stillness, non-aggression, and receptive awareness. Furthermore, it demonstrates that the energy of wise action comes directly out of the energy of the situation itself rather than from any forced effort or aggressive manipulation. When mind and body are completely synchronized, there is no separation between thought and action. Appropriate activity flows naturally from accurate perception of what is needed in the present moment.

If we apply this analogy to teaching, it can be quite helpful. If a teacher tries to impose control on his or her class, it is perceived by the students as an unnatural and unnecessary restriction which provokes their natural and intelligent sense of rebellion. This is like a fighter who is coming from a place of aggression, wanting to subdue his enemy. In the practice of contemplative psychotherapy, I have recognized that such aggression can manifest itself in very subtle ways. For example, any impulse to impose my agenda on my clients is a form of therapeutic aggression which I learn to avoid or at least note and gradually renounce. On the other hand, it is possible to have positive power in a therapeutic or teaching relationship. This power is rooted in non-aggression and a receptive, accurate perception. Like the martial artist described above, a teacher who is acutely aware of his or her students – their strengths and weaknesses, their style of learning, the rise and fall of their elemental energies – is well armed as a warrior of the classroom to redirect even the most chaotic forces back into their natural direction of learning and development. The great master warrior Sun Tzu writes in his famous text, The Art of War:

For to win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill.

Nonetheless, it is sometimes necessary to wield a swift ‘sword’ that cuts confusion. In accomplishing the wisdom of the wind element, a teacher can manifest firmness and the power to stop the escalation of negative forces. When it would be harmful to allow neurotic confusion to perpetuate, the compassionate thing to do is to destroy it. If
this is done completely without aggression, there will be a sense of relief afterwards for everyone involved.

The distorted energy of the wind element in contrast to the wisdom is characterized by a lack of synchronization between body and mind. Often mind is racing ahead of body, causing confusion by continuously projecting future possibilities and clinging to them with the emotions of hope or fear. Or there is the other extreme, where body is ahead of mind, leaping blindly into action without adequate awareness or forethought. For most of us, truly synchronizing body and mind is a rare occurrence that has something of the flavor and feel of what Maslow (1971) called peak experiences. Most of us normally function at a level that is less than ideal in relation to this energy of action, meaning that our bodies and our minds are more or less desynchronized most of the time. Because we cling to our sense of a separate self-identity, body, mind and environment, which are all slightly desynchronized, we are continuously left with a feeling that things are not quite right. The false self is like a conceptual boundary or a dam that breaks the flow, separating elemental qualities in the environment from those experienced within our psychophysical system. The result is perceptual distortion and conflicting emotions. At some level, we are aware that our perception is somewhat distorted, inaccurate and not always complete or trustworthy. This awareness of our desynchronization, although positive in and of itself, generates a vague and ever-present fear which can escalate into becoming a feeling that we are being threatened from an unknown power outside ourselves. We might be conscious of it as an anxious feeling that at any time something could go wrong or something might happen that could undermine us or our position. Then we can become vigilant in a paranoid way, fearing that if we miss something it could be our downfall.

When these feelings escalate, diverting the natural wisdom energy of the wind element into a reverberation of thoughts and feelings in a self-perpetuating cycle, one experiences what is known in Buddhist language as the Realm of the Jealous Gods. The Jealous God Realm is dominated by concerns for power, achievement, the need to win and
a basic sense of the struggle to maintain territory and to survive. The jealous gods, or *asuras* in Indian mythology, are described as very intelligent and powerful demigods who yearn intensely for the full bliss of godhood and therefore will do anything to get it. Meanwhile, they are also threatened from others like themselves and therefore must also fight to hold on to what they have. A predominant feeling in this realm is one of suspicion and paranoia; there is a chance that everyone you know is plotting a conspiracy against you.

This state of mind is preoccupied with gaining territory, whether literal territory, like enemy armies fighting over a scrap of land, or territory as a metaphor for those roles or aspects of our lives with which we over-identify, such as our jobs, our social status, our marriages or relationships, our positions of power and authority, etc. We feel our territory is under threat. Someone out there is trying to undermine us. We can become defensive, then offensive, and eventually aggressive and violent.

The subtle escalations that can turn tiny flickers of envy or jealousy into full-blown paranoia and eventual acts of aggression and violence are brilliantly portrayed in Shakespeare’s plays, such as in Othello and Macbeth. Also, I have found that the Godfather movies portray this sophisticated and cunning realm of kill-or-be-killed so well that my state of mind and my style of perception are altered, bent toward clinging to power and an edge of paranoia, for some time after watching these films.

Similar in some ways to the hell realm, in that this realm deals with anger and aggression, it differs in that the *vajra* style wishes to maintain distance, while this mentality engages right away. Also similar to the yearning and aspiring of the human realm that always compares oneself with others, this approach goes further with a fierce and unscrupulous competitiveness. This style is obsessed with comparing self to other, for the continual sense of struggle to gain and maintain territory is always seen in reference to what is possessed by others. All of us at one time or another have compared ourselves with others who, like the description of the self-actualized person given above, seem to be more efficient, more capable, more content and more relaxed than ourselves. They seem to get all
the lucky breaks and always seem to enjoy their life, while we are cursed with a lesser fate and strive to be like them. We envy them, secretly wishing we had their knowledge, their skills and their success. Living life from the perspective of this twisted, neurotic energy is very intense and very demanding because one is always striving for perfection.

From this particularly twisted view of life, relationships with others are all seen in relation to one’s position on the imaginary ladder of achievement. As this neurotic style involves always comparing oneself with others that are higher up or lower down, one is constantly driven by a relentless sense of competition. One looks up to those ahead, perhaps sometimes with admiration, but more likely with envy and resentment. One sneers and condescends in relation to those below, while also fearing that they might overtake one. This neurotic style of relating leaves very little room for genuine friendship or concern for others. The whole affair is taken to be very serious, a life-or-death struggle wherein there is no room left for joy or a sense of humour. Even if one reaches the top, there is a fear that someone will come to knock one from the pinnacle and take one’s place there.

Quite often, the intense sense of competition in this realm of perverted wind energy is more subtle, as when one competes against oneself. Nevertheless, this can be just as narrow-minded and painful because the mental image of oneself, against which one competes, is so totally perfect that it never allows a chance to accept one’s imperfections or show a little kindness towards oneself.

When mind and body are desynchronized, the energy of activity can sometimes run out of control, like a tornado. People can whip themselves into a frenzy of activity. Their mind becomes locked in on a vaguely unreachable goal that drives them into cycles of ever-increasing speed, panic and confusion. Some people thrive on this sense of panic. They feel they need stress and excitement in order to keep them acting at the peak of their ability. They are only happy when the demands around them far exceed their ability to meet them, and they are called on to greater and greater challenges. Meanwhile, they may be deluding themselves. Perhaps the needs being expressed are not as urgent as they perceive them, and
all their apparent diligence is for naught. Perhaps all they are really doing is chasing their own tail or creating a tempest in a teacup. They stir up trouble in one place with all their frenetic activity, then rush off to another place to solve the problems that, unbeknownst to them, were caused by their last visit there.

The ultimate caricature of this style might be imagined as a character in an absurd play who is always rushing from one place to the next but never actually arrives anywhere. Before he has arrived at one stop on his agenda he is rushing off to the next. We have all seen in others, or know what it is like in ourselves, to be so busy going somewhere that we never allow ourselves to arrive, or similarly, are so busy doing that we never stop to savour our accomplishments.

Another typical example of this style is the person who has twelve different projects going at once. Like the performer who is spinning many plates balanced on sticks, he or she has just enough time to run from one to the next in order to merely keep the whole thing up and running. Perhaps if they had the chance to step back from the situation, they might wonder what are they actually accomplishing. This tremendously speedy state of mind can generate endless confusion, not only for oneself, but also for everyone else that comes in contact with it. Others are often left to clean up the messes left behind by someone in a whirlwind of manic, self-perpetuating activity.

This neurotic obsession with keeping oneself busy can be a powerful form of denial. To avoid feeling anxiety, grief or the intensity of other emotions, people will drive themselves without ceasing in their work, recreation, or social life. Experiencing a gap, with nothing to do, can be extremely frightening for such people, as it allows whatever emotions they have been warding off to rise up into their consciousness. This socially acceptable mode of denial with its frantic pace, made in some way legitimate by the Protestant work ethic, seems to be taken for granted in North America as the norm. Beyond this it is even regarded as an enviable behaviour of the highly successful by those who also yearn for success.
This confused energy that spins itself in endless cycles of excessive busy work is also evidenced in bureaucracies. Governmental agencies and other types of huge bureaucracies are famous for generating a tremendous fury of activity but never really accomplishing very much.

An altogether different way in which this energy of activity becomes confused is in the frozen space of procrastination and indecision. In its most exaggerated state, this style of mind can manifest as a catatonic stillness where even the slightest move is restricted by the overwhelming power of indecision. This freezing of activity is actually a manifestation of a mind overrun by an extremely rapid succession of reversing thought patterns. Because the mind is overly engaged in projecting all the possible outcomes of even the slightest movement, there is no possibility of simply taking a step into the unknown. In less extreme cases, this constant second guessing leads to hesitation and incompetence, feelings of laziness, depression, and lack of motivation.

Teachers of young children and adolescents know that one moment of hesitation or indecision can result in half an hour or more of chaos and disruption. If teachers doubt themselves and their intuition, the children pick up on it as a lack of clear direction and take advantage of the moment to release their energy in undirected and even harmful ways. On the other hand, if a teacher is overly controlling of students, based on a fear of chaos and misbehaviour, the classroom environment takes on the quality of a prison in which students become resentful, and any meaningful learning is denied them.

If teachers work to master their own personal wisdom of benevolent power, effortless effort, skilful means, and spontaneous, joyful activity, they will naturally encourage their students to develop in the same direction.
CHAPTER 20 NOTES

1 The active quality of air and wind element in our lives can be compared to Kolb's pole of active experimentation (1979) and to Jung's sensing types (1923). However, any comparison is speculation because there are no fundamentally common criteria in these different systems of classification. This is evident in McCarthy's system (1980) as I see **karma** energy corresponding to her type four dynamic learners, but also to her problem-solving type three common-sense learners. McCarthy says of her type four dynamic learners that they seek hidden possibilities, take risks and learn by trial-and-error, while type three common-sense learners are pragmatic and skills-oriented, they value strategic thinking and like to tinker with things. The choleric temperament (Harwood, 1958; Littauer, 1983) seems to correspond quite well in its qualities to those of the **karma** family: dynamic and active, strong-willed and decisive, not easily discouraged, independent, confident, leader traits, organized, goal-oriented, practical, oppositional and competitive.

2 From the ultimate perspective of enlightenment, this non-dual wisdom of action transcends the inner outer duality of Kolb's processing continuum which polarizes the need to internalize and the need to act (discussed earlier in chapter 6; see Kolb, 1979, 1983; McCarthy, 1980). Ideally, these two become one as 'meditation in action' or a synchronization of mind and environment (see Trungpa 1976). This contemplative approach which merges inner and outer, thought and action is also expressed in the neo-Confucian philosophy of Wang Yang Ming in his 'Instructions for Practical Living' (Chan, 1963, pp. 667-691).

3 The warrior archetype encompasses the hero archetype, which Campbell (1949) explores through world mythology in the journey of departure, initiation and return. Moore and Gillette (1990), investigating male psychology, explain how the Hero energy calls upon a boy to establish independence and competence in defeating immature energies of the Hero-shadow, which they call the 'Grandstander Bully,' who insists on centre stage, and the 'Coward,' who is afraid to fight. Yet the energy of the Hero, according to their view, is still only an advanced stage of adolescent 'boy psychology.' The energy of the hero finds its ultimate manifestation in the Warrior, who harnesses the power of aggression and overcomes the shadow aspects of Sadist and Masochist through extensive training and discipline of body and mind. The mature Warrior binds himself to transpersonal commitments, transcending petty ego concerns and with an ever-present awareness of his own imminent death he is able to focus and direct his life force with a concentrated intensity. Pearson (1991) tells us that 'Warrioring is about claiming our power in the world, establishing our place in the world, and making that world a better place.' Furthermore, she says that 'The well-developed internal warrior is necessary, above all, to protect our boundaries. Without courageous, disciplined, and well-trained warriors, the kingdom is always in danger of being overrun by barbarians. Without a strong internal warrior, we have no defence against the demands and intrusions of others.' She also reminds us that we live at present in a 'Warrior culture wherein all of our institutions from education to the judicial system, from capitalist economics, to sports and politics are based on competition' (p. 95). At the higher levels of this archetype, victory is achieved without bloodshed, and ideally it is a victory for all concerned, a win/win situation without loss of face for any party concerned (pp. 104-106). Fields (1991) examines principles of warriorship in the history of diverse cultures worldwide and Trungpa (1988) describes what he calls the 'Sacred path of the warrior': 'here the word "warrior" is taken from the Tibetan "pawo," which literally means 'one who is brave.' Warriorship in this context is the tradition of human bravery, or the tradition of fearlessness' (p. 28). 'The essence of warriorship, or the essence of human bravery, is refusing to give up on anyone or anything' (p. 33).

4 Heckler, 'Entering Into The Place Of Conflict,' in Wellwood (Ed.) (1983).

5 Fields (1991) says that some consider **akido** to be the evolutionary apex of the way of the warrior. Ueshiba, the founder of **akido**, able to easily defeat five or six simultaneous attackers in his eighties, explains: "Regardless of how quickly an opponent attacks or how slowly I respond, I cannot be defeated. It is not that my techniques are faster than those of my opponent. It has nothing to do with speed or slowness. I am victorious right from the start. As soon as the thought of attack crosses my opponent's mind, he shatters the harmony of the universe and is instantly defeated regardless of how quickly he attacks" (Stevens, 1987, p. 112, quoted in Fields, 1991, p. 205).

6 This naked awareness of a distortion can serve as the motivating factor to relax ego clinging and resolve the problem. However, for this to happen, a certain level of fear and uncertainty or 'groundlessness,'
which Trungpa speaks of, must be tolerated so that the escalation of the process described here can be short-circuited or boycotted (see Trungpa, 1973, 1988).

7 For a description of paralysis due to speed of mind, see Podvoll, The Seduction of Madness, chapter four: 'Major Ordeals of Psychotic Mind.'
Chapter 21
Buddha: The Wisdom Energy of Space

• Staring into a clear blue sky • Blank sheet anxiety • A moment of openness • Tying our hot air balloon to the stakes of earthly conditions • Freedom to be both engaged and disengaged within the transparent context • Throwing away the map • Students who go unnoticed • The realm of the gods, absorbed in pleasure • The sleepy stupor of denial and the fear of change • No laughs in the animal realm • Clinging to habits • Fear of emotions • Autism and self-stimulation • Useless mind loops • Shifting states • Dream weaving • Daydreaming • Fearlessness • Space to discover self-respect •

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Space is not an element exactly like the other four: water, earth, fire and air. Rather, it is the unconditioned, open medium within which the other four arise, dwell and pass away. Just as clouds can gather in an empty sky, growing in size, power and majesty and then dissipate back into the clear blue without a trace, so the four styles of psychological energy appear and disappear within this fundamental and all-pervasive experience of psychological space.

The wisdom energy of space is the ultimate source of the other four wisdoms. It is the fundamental principle of wisdom that runs through all the others and activates them. This wisdom of all-encompassing space is also referred to as the wisdom of all-potentiality and ubiquitous intelligence. It is the ground of everything, both wisdom and confusion.

When the energy and power of this psychological space is feared and avoided it becomes denial, stupidity, active ignoring, numbness and confusion—in short, the very opposite of wisdom. Vidya in Sanskrit means intelligence and refers to this most basic quality of consciousness: open and free, pregnant with possibilities, while avidya, where the syllable ‘a’ serves as a negation, means ignorance and stupidity. In this Buddhist
scheme, wakeful intelligence is the natural state, primordial and eternally present, while confusion is a temporary disturbance, a clouding over of the natural state.¹

Imagine that you are lying on your back staring directly into the depths of the clear blue sky. Absolutely nothing obstructs your view of the seemingly infinite expanse above you. As you lie there, you experience a sense of utter nakedness. Your mind is awake but empty, and very brilliant, like a shining light. Nothing happens. Then suddenly, as if waking from a dream, you realize that you have become distracted and that you are occupied with some petty concern. You look again into the sky to see that clouds have arisen out of the clear blue and you hadn’t even noticed their arrival. Once again you project your mind out and up into the sky and experience again that sense of alertness and freedom with a surge of energy outward. It almost feels as if you are flying. This pattern repeats itself over and over, while evening comes and night falls, leaving you staring into the vast darkness punctuated with stars. You are filled with a sense of profound wonder mixed with a tinge of fear, sadness, humility and a sense of being utterly alone. After a time, the vastness of the sky and the openness of your mind become overwhelming, and you drift into a deep, unconscious sleep.

The Buddhist conception of space is not merely void, but luminous and alive, in a sense vibrating, with all-potentiality. Just as white light can produce all of the colours of the rainbow, allowing every possible form and colour of the visible world to manifest to the eye, so the luminous aspect of psychological space gives rise to all manner of experience. These experiences arise out of the open space and are then reabsorbed back into space which once more quivers with infinite possibilities as yet unmanifest.

This wisdom energy has to do with the process of creativity and the process of invoking insight and intelligence from within. Imagine a child sitting before a large blank sheet of white paper. The emptiness of the paper invites whatever there is within the child to come out and fill the page. That moment before the crayon or paint brush touches the page is the magical moment of all-potentiality: open space.
Far too often we do not let children or ourselves experience the simplicity and power of that empty moment. It can feel like a moment of tremendous anxiety and pressure. For that reason we usually cut it short by avoiding the openness and rushing to get on with the next thing. Or we become unconscious and stupid, dulled to the anxiety and dulled to the potentiality. Artists know the anxiety of the blank canvas, and writers know the anguish of those first few sentences. Choreographers know that once they choose the first key gestures, the tone of the dance will be set, and from there the dance will take off, as if it had a life of its own.\textsuperscript{2}

This moment of openness that often provokes a twinge of fear occurs not only at the threshold of self-expression but is an integral part of our everyday life. We are constantly on the threshold between one thing and another. One activity is finished and the other has not yet begun: a moment of openness. Recognizing these moments and respecting them, without trying to rush through them, we can avail ourselves to the wisdom of all-potentiality. If we settle into these moments and we remain conscious while nothing is happening, we have a chance to make a choice about what is to happen next. In particular, we have a chance to try something new and thus step out of the rut of our conditioned habit patterns.

If teachers were trained to be still in this moment of crossing the threshold between psychological events, and if they were given the tools that would help them learn to accommodate their own anxiety in the moments of transition, how much better prepared they would be to guide their students in the process of self-discovery. Teachers are guides and models for their students. If the guide is nervous and uneasy upon crossing into uncharted territory, then those who follow will also feel fear. However, if a teacher enters into the unknown, the uncharted regions of empty space, with confidence and joy, then those who follow will also bravely go with a smile beyond the limits of what they know.

Yet this is not as easy as it may sound. To experience openness fully can be terrifying. Our consciousness as we usually experience it is held in place, as it were, by
various reference points which we depend on for a sense of security and identity. Like a hot air balloon being held down by stakes driven into the ground, we have our own personal habits and ways of doing things: the way we eat, the foods we like, the way we comb our hair or brush our teeth, the way we talk, our tone of voice, choice of words, our use of irony or wit, the way we talk to ourselves, the way we think, the way we choose to feel or express our emotions. All of these and more, infinite in number, make up for us the pattern of our personal experience.

These personal habit patterns interface with the patterns of others within various concentric circles of familiarity; there is our own family and our circle of friends, neighbours, colleagues and the community of people within the specific region where we live. There is the culture we share with them, including the specific language we speak and the endless unwritten and written rules of conduct and communication. We have a personal history and we are embedded within the history of our social, religious, philosophical, economic, and ethnic group. We are part of a nation and a world of nations where the ideals of nationalism and nationhood lead nations to try and obliterate other nations. We are human and share in all of the qualities and patterns of experience associated with being human. As humans, we are also mammals and share certain patterns of experience associated with being a mammal. Finally, we inhabit this earth, and beyond the experience of a handful of astronauts who have ventured outside the earth’s atmosphere, we know life only as it is conditioned by living on this earth with this particular sky above, with its night and day, sun and moon, fixed stars and wandering planets.

All of this comes into play in every moment of our lives. Every step we take is rooted in this rich context and influenced by the innumerable vectors of these conditions. Every time we find ourselves in a moment in between things, after something is finished and before the next thing has taken shape, we are at a moment of choice. We can jump into the new situation with the same old habits. Thus, by carrying our tendencies from the past blindly into the future, we maintain a restricted view of our context and cut off the vastness
of the potential inherent in each moment. The other option we have is to slow down for a moment and disengage from the complexity of being trapped in a context. We can see the inherent space in our psychological process and know that we are not doomed to repeat the past. We are able to perceive ourselves and our context clearly and without bias, and thus we are free to make a wiser choice about how to proceed.

In the moment-to-moment psychological process of our day-to-day lives, most of us ignore the all-encompassing vastness of our context and are not aware that we are part of something much larger than ourselves and our own immediate situation. Furthermore, we are, most of us, afraid of seeing this bigger picture, because to do so means letting go of a tendency to see ourselves as the central reference point. We are afraid to step outside of what we know as familiar. Our sense of psychological security is dependent on keeping the hot air balloon of our consciousness tied to the ground with all those stakes that define for us who we think we are and what we think we are about. We are semiconscious, entranced and absorbed in our own version of reality. I myself know that I can be at times so totally engaged in my own plans, my own approach, my own view and my own ways of doing things in a particular moment that I do not step back or step outside myself to include even one other person, let alone a vaster vision.

If we live for a time in a radically different culture than our own, we are able to disengage somewhat from those ways of being which we take for granted. When we return to our own culture, we see it as if with new eyes because we are not so caught up in it, and we are more free to choose how we wish to re-engage ourselves. This freedom that results from disengaging oneself from at least a part of the conditioned habit patterns of one’s own particular existence is one aspect of the wisdom energy of space. However, the fundamental experience of the wisdom of space has to do with having that same kind of perspective without needing to step outside of one’s ongoing context, because the psychological space is always there if we can but recognize it.\(^4\)
Awareness itself has enough space to include the experience of being fully engaged in the process of the moment, while at the same time seeing through it as if it were transparent. This is what is known in Mahayana Buddhism as the experience of emptiness. Emptiness to Westerners conjures up a vast wasteland or a vacuum, a meaningless void. Such an image has nothing to do with the experience Buddhists call shunyata. As we have discussed before, emptiness means empty of clinging, empty of concept, and empty of projection. It means having the awareness to see through one's interpretation of reality. Seeing through it, one can extract oneself and one's version of things out of experience so that perception is direct and accurate. Thereby, one is free to move in ways that are not bound by the conditions of the past. Space is this aspect of the mind that is free of all conditioning – open, clear, and non-attached. This is the ultimate nature of mind.

Whatever is seen with the eyes is vividly unreal in emptiness, yet there is still form...

Whatever is heard with the ears is the echo of emptiness, yet real...

Good and bad, happy and sad, all thoughts vanish into emptiness like the imprint of a bird in the sky...

Whatever arises is merely the play of the mind...

It is possible to perceive oneself in one's context with pristine clarity from the perspective of its infinite vastness down to the precision of the tiniest detail without becoming trapped in it. Becoming trapped has to do with believing what you perceive. Or to put it more accurately, clinging to what you have perceived in the past by using the tools we call concepts.

The mental categories, images and generalizations that we as adult human beings refer to as concepts are indeed useful tools, for they allow us to manipulate bits and pieces of our version of reality at lightning speeds. Nonetheless, most of us live our lives mistaking the map for the territory. More importantly, we not only mistake the map for the
territory, we invest our emotional well-being, our sense of security, identity and our very sense of existence on this flimsy version of reality that is our map.

This wisdom energy of space is a multidimensional awareness that includes these tools we call concepts but is not emotionally dependent on them. Imagine that you are lost in the mountains and are desperately clinging to your worn and tattered map. This map has been a good friend, a useful tool that has gotten you through many a winding valley and seemingly impassable pass. Yet for this new territory it is no longer useful. Its distortions are causing you too much confusion. Reluctantly, you let the map go and proceed on pure intuition. When you reach your destination, you realize that there was some direct relationship between your body and the terrain, and you felt led by a kind of unknown knowing.6

The wisdom energy of space allows us to hold various different levels of awareness, including contradictory concepts, conflicting philosophies and views, opinions and critiques, personal feelings, and higher ideals, all within the same utterly impartial container, without ever being seduced into following any one of them. The experience of space can allow for the coldness of water, the heat of fire, the solidity of earth and the speedy lightness of wind. The wisdom of space can accommodate the intensity of emotional experience without fearfully suppressing it or blindly acting it out. It becomes as if all of these emotional energies were a child’s games being acted out in one small corner of an endlessly vast universe. Water churns, fire burns, earth sits and wind stirs. If there is enough space, each of these can flourish and naturally fall into the appropriate place, creating the mandala of wisdom.

What are the particular idiosyncratic qualities of a person who relates predominantly to this style of wisdom? This is hard to say, because this style will more or less always be coloured by one or more of the other four styles described above. Nevertheless, it is possible to make some generalizations as to how this style might manifest. A person tending more toward the wisdom energy of space might show more interest in a philosophical, metaphysical, and religious direction. Their appearance and personality
might be one that doesn’t provoke much of a response in others, either positive or negative. In fact, they may be the one in a group that others have a hard time remembering due to a lack of any particular colourful trait that makes them stand out from the crowd. They can be the students who go unnoticed in the classroom. Their speech might be deceptively simple. They state the obvious, but somehow it rings true. At second inspection, what they say is pregnant with meaning and profound in its many implications. Conversely, they can come up with ideas that seem to have absolutely no relationship to the matter at hand, yet prove to be creative leaps of genius. This kind of person may be the quiet type who doesn’t say much but when she does speak people listen. This is because what she says has the ring of wisdom that only comes from being able to step outside of the situation.

They can seem lost in deep thought, with a far-away look in their eyes, or they may stare with a deadpan gaze, dumbly oblivious to what is going on around them. In fact, they may be the type that find it easy to enter into all kinds of ‘altered states of consciousness,’ some harmless, some useful, and others harmful or stupefying. Similarly, one aspect of addiction to mind-altering drugs is this tendency to seek out blissful states of mind that selectively edit out any painful aspect of one’s reality. The perverted aspect of this wisdom is characterized in the tendency we all have to escape from the pressure, stress and anxieties of life into a dull and cozy stupor.

Each of the other four wisdom styles we have investigated correspond to one of the six realms. The wisdom energy of space, however, is associated with two realms. These two realms characterize two different aspects of space as confusion. The two realms are traditionally known in Buddhist doctrine as the ‘realm of the gods’ and the ‘animal realm.’

Attempting to escape from the vibrant intensity and feelings of groundless insubstantiality experienced as part of the bright light of Vairocana and his female partner, who represent together the wisdom energy of the purified element of space, one may gravitate to the softer light and formulate an experience in the realm of the gods. Turning away from the brilliance of non-duality, there is a sense of bliss or pleasure which is
experienced while a subtle duality is reasserted and a vague but expansive sense of identity comes together. With this identity comes a need to secure and prolong this state of mind, especially since there is pleasure involved. This becomes the habit pattern for the god realm, a self-absorbed state of mind, preoccupied with maintaining a continuous experience of pleasure.

All of us fall into this category at one time or another. Freud’s notion of the pleasure principle maintained that this was the *modus-operandi* of being human. Most of us find that it is very difficult to maintain such a realm of pleasure and thereby find ourselves struggling in other ways and cycling through all six realms of existence in our own idiosyncratic ways. There are people, however, who have a special talent for maintaining themselves in a more or less pleasurable state of existence without feeling penetrated by the irritations and annoyances, emotional highs and lows that life’s little inconveniences and problems cause for most of us. For some, this may be a virtue because they do it with awareness. However, for others there is a kind of blindness. This style of blindness is also quite common to us all, a systematic shutting out of anything that might cause irritation, pain or sorrow, or somehow pop the bubble of our pleasure dome. In psychological terms, we might refer to this blindness as a primary defense mechanism or as denial.

People who gravitate toward this realm are also those who have a tendency to intoxication. When they cannot create the denial that they need to shut out what they don’t like about their life, or the anxiety they feel, they reach for an easy chemical solution. There are also other ways in which people can heighten their denial. Through certain kinds of spiritual ideals, concentration and types of meditation, people can succeed in stepping outside of their life and thereby also avoid distraction that would interrupt their pleasure. All of these systems for preserving pleasure have their drawbacks, and eventually cause a kind of crash or fall from unreality.

Another way of conceptualizing the pleasure of the god realm and the power of denial is to examine the discrepancy between rich and poor in our world. If we look at the
tremendous discrepancy between the life enjoyed by the rich and elite in the world as
compared to that of the poorest of poor in countries blighted with natural catastrophes,
sickness, famine and war, we see denial operating on a global scale where the very
structure of our world economy has been devised through a history of colonialism,
mercantilism and various other mechanisms, feeding the wealthy at the expense of the
poor. Some of those who live privileged lives strive more or less to make themselves aware
of the vast suffering of others and work to help, while others, perhaps the majority,
continue to amass wealth and power, oblivious to the suffering of others.

Both the god realm and the animal realm are characterized by a fear of change and
fear of whatever exists outside one’s narrow experience of the world. There is a fear that
prevents the conscious exploration or spontaneous experience of the vastness of awareness
or the depths both within and without. This manifests, in particular, as a fear of the
intensity of the elemental emotions. The intensity of desire, passion, lust, greed, pride,
anger, hatred, envy, jealousy, hope and fear are seen as very disturbing. In the realm of the
gods, these elemental emotions threaten one’s experience of pleasure. From the animal
realm perspective, they seem to threaten survival and therefore serve to stimulate instinctive
reactions such as sexual arousal, flight, fight, etc. Intellectually, one might regard these
emotions as primitive, uncivilized and an unnecessary complication. In this way, one
creates a justification for denying their presence in one’s life, thereby effectively cutting off
the wisdom energy.

The animal realm represents a severe limiting of the mind’s ability to step outside of
itself. This results in a narrow frame of reference in which habitual patterns of body,
speech and mind are repeated over and over in a very predictable way, without any
variation or expansion into new and different modes of being.7

The pattern of mind in the animal realm is like a kind of game where we intelligently
pretend to be ignorant. For example, children will suddenly put on an act of incompetence
and stupidity, perhaps when they feel they are growing up too fast or when mother asks
them to take on some responsibility around the house by doing chores. In a similar way, we all play deaf and dumb, now and then, when we want to avoid experiences we find unpleasant, too strenuous or boring.

Since the style of luminosity that frightens self-conscious ego mind is the wisdom energy of all-encompassing space and all-potentiality, we tend to ward it off by narrowing down our field of awareness. One sure way to do this is to fix our sights on a concrete goal. Nose to the ground, we forge ahead holding one thing in mind, like a pig that simply eats everything in its path.

The fundamental problem with this approach is that there is no sense of humour. So narrow is the tunnel vision that there is no space to step outside oneself to gain a sense of irony or humour. This is symbolized by animals, which, though they can feel joy and pain, generally cannot laugh, smile or particularly enjoy the subtleties of a sense of humour. For myself, I know that my tenacious clinging to the goal-oriented drama of a graduate education has had at times a powerful effect, narrowing my awareness and squelching my sense of humour. While on the self-imposed treadmill, it is often difficult to step outside oneself to see oneself objectively, with a smile.

Similarly to the way animals operate on instinct, we can depend completely upon habits as a way to cope with the complexity of life. A certain amount of habit is vitally necessary as William James (1983) has pointed out; however, a certain stupidity and dullness can set in when we become deeply entrenched in a routinized pattern of mind. We can become very set in our ways, avoiding any change that might upset our habitual routine. Someone living this kind of very predictable life can be lulled into a certain kind of sleep-walking.

It is important to note, however, that structure, predictability and repetition of particular patterns in life can also be very liberating. It is all a matter of how one makes use of the boredom that results from a highly routinized life. Boredom is an experience of space. If boredom provokes one into becoming curious about things that you have never
taken the time to notice before, thus expanding your mind beyond its normal limitation, then routine is liberating. However, if one simply fixates on the repetition, ignoring the space created in the irritation of boredom, one misses the opportunity to look beyond the routine. Then one becomes intimidated by the world beyond, and fearful of any change. This dullness of mind can increase in an ever-tightening spiral, closing in upon itself further and further.

Along with the fear of change and the fear of whatever exists outside one’s narrow experience of the world, there is a mirror fear, the fear to experience and explore the depths within oneself, especially one’s emotions.

There are many gross and subtle ways of maintaining the self-imposed blinkers that characterize this realm. Any repetitive pattern that creates a closed loop can successfully shut out greater awareness. Through various repetitive thought patterns, patterns of speech, habitual emotional cycles, and patterns of bodily movement and self-stimulation, a person can create absorption states that perpetuate and block out awareness. In the extreme animal realm mentality, one is not able to see oneself mirrored by others at all; one shuts out the messages that come back from one’s environment to create a self-contained, self-justifying trap.

Childhood autism is such a withdrawal from contact with others into a self-absorbed state of mind. It is often maintained by a cultivated mindlessness. By repeating specific bodily movements, verbalizations and specific thought patterns, a child or adult can spin a sensory cocoon or smokescreen which effectively blocks out normal sensory awareness. Podvoll (1990) refers to this kind of autistic habit as ‘mindless practices’ and conceives of them as the opposite of the mindfulness practices of Buddhist meditation. He cites Bruno Bettelheim, who observed these tendencies in autistic children and conceived of them in a similar way:

The autistic child, through his own efforts, achieves a state of non-attentiveness to stimuli which has all the appearances of a state of
dysfunction of the system serving arousal... This he does, for example, by his monotonous, continuous self-stimulation which arises, in part, from his motor behavior. In a sense, any stimulus from the outside is then lost, either by being blotted out, or in the concentration on inner sensations alone.  

As the developmental process is obstructed by this confusion, the person regresses to the earliest stages of child development involved with solipsistic self-stimulation. Using these mindless practices effectively cuts the person off from contact with the outside world. After a time, they become so efficient at cultivating this cut-off that it becomes internalized. Consider the detailed observations of the Nobel laureate ethologist Niko Tinbergen and his wife Elizabeth:

The child often fails to respond to stimuli that normally would make him approach but which his anxiety prevents him from actually acting on. Closing the eyes (gaze aversion) or (equally common) putting the hands over the ears is a mechanical means of achieving this cut-off, but these children also protect themselves by central nervous cut-off, by simply refusing to see or hear (without showing overt withdrawal) and perhaps even by actually not seeing or hearing.

I have worked with children who, while in gradual recovery, apply themselves to outwardly focused tasks briefly, only to revert time and time again back to their repetitive self-stimulating, mindless practices as means of coping with their frustration and anxiety. Seeing this routine demonstrated on a gross and obvious level helped me to see how I myself, and almost everyone I know, tend to do the same thing at various levels of subtlety.

Anyone observing a classroom full of noisy and nervous primary students in the midst of being introduced to new letters in the alphabet, new words, numbers, or any such abstract adult invention can plainly see similar signs of self-stimulation in response to the pressure and frustration. Many adults also, when under the stress of attempting to go beyond themselves in learning or performing, will impulsively resort to a subtle fidget such as chin- or beard-stroking, or a repeated stroke of the forehead. I don't mean to suggest
that such gestures of self-stimulation are necessarily regressive or indicative of mild autism. On the contrary, if used wisely, such brief lapses in the etiquette of stillness may serve as a means to trigger a withdrawal from a particular sub-system of mind, a particular state of consciousness, in order to momentarily shift to another. By doing so, one is able to draw upon diverse mind states that may be more immediately applicable forms of intelligence, while consistent attention to external stimuli may lock one into repetitions of useless mind loops. Repetition of any mental pattern can serve to block out unwanted stimuli while the wisdom of the space element seems to have something to do with allowing for gaps even in the most intense concentration.

Retreating to an inwardly focussed concentration and shifting mind states can work against the learning process, or it can greatly enhance it, depending on many variables such as one’s motivation, emotional sense of safety and well-being, timing, rhythm, and patterns of transition. Much of the learning process seems to me to have to do with developing skill in how and when to shift your mind into different states and, at higher levels, how to integrate those different states with a constant flow of communication, until they begin to operate as one harmonious whole.

Understanding the autistic tendency intellectually, and knowing for oneself intuitively what it feels like to retreat into a semi-autistic state, even if just for an instant, can be a very valuable tool for a teacher. Learning, especially for children, seems to involve an alternating rhythm between attending to perception and somehow integrating that perception into their own unfolding intelligence. Every person has a different rhythm and different method for switching from an outwardly directed perception to an inward perception. Through meditation, teachers can heighten their sensitivity to the most minute movements of their own mind, which in turn helps them to become aware of the idiosyncratic learning process of each student.

Various forms of psychosis (Podvoll, 1989) can also be understood and effectively treated when seen as extremely constricted states of mind that have become addictive.
Sometimes when a person experiences a trauma or, especially, repeated trauma, they discover a way to distance themselves from their experience by escaping into a world of their own creation. This world of escape, woven like a dream, serves as an effective curtain to block out the traumatic experience, and in certain cases, most other aspects of experience. The person becomes a virtuoso at weaving dream and reality into the fabric of experience and is capable of escaping into their fully developed alternative world whenever there is the slightest perceived threat. The mind of the psychotic person becomes so deeply engaged in the weaving of the dream and living within that dream that he finds it increasingly difficult to pay attention to the tasks of everyday life, such as eating, bathing, sleeping, and communicating with others.

This tendency to escape into a dream world is not exclusive to psychotic patients, but is used by all of us to one degree or another. Some of us are more skilled at weaving a dream world than others. Some are also better at making the transition between their personal dream world and the common world we share within a particular culture. They do not let their dream world interfere or distract them from life’s tasks. Most of us, however, are not so adept. A person may not necessarily be psychotic to experience a jarring sense of confusion and disorientation when caught between the two worlds.

Daydreaming is often cited as a cause of school failure. Yet how much do we know about how to help someone who becomes disoriented and confused when they attempt to make that transition from their dream world back into the world of school? If teachers were trained to recognize the signs of switching in and out of various dream states, particularly by becoming sensitive to their own patterns of mind, they would be more capable of reaching a child who might otherwise be out of reach. In my experience of working with people severely disturbed by mental illness, I note that my awareness of subtle clues can mean the difference between a meaningful therapy session and one of meaningless talk that does nothing to cut through self-absorption, neither my own or that of the patient.
The wisdom energy of space seems to have to do with developing a familiarity with the bright light of mind itself, so that one does not shy away from its brilliant intensity. Along with the intensity there is a vastness, a limitlessness of mind, that can also seem overwhelming. Developing courage in the face of this vastness opens us to all kinds of possibilities, while fear of the intense vastness of mind causes restriction into closed loops. Meditation seems to be a way to sit directly in our personal experience of fear and to gradually develop an attitude of fearlessness, allowing us to explore the brilliant intensity of mind. Also, by learning to work with the various states of mind in oneself, knowing how and when they shift, one becomes familiar with the shifting states in the mental space of others.

In grade six, I finally had a teacher that seemed to understand me. Until that time, I had felt oppressed by the way the teachers pushed their agenda on me. Because the teachers and I were not synchronized, it seemed to me that they didn’t care about me. They seemed forceful and disrespectful, and I felt like giving up. The openness of my experience on the rocks was shattered and my appreciation for the subtle rhythms of experience was dulled and distracted. Then, in grade six, a gentle young woman read poems and stories to us and respected what each of us had to say. Her classroom had an open, spacious feeling, so that I knew I was safe to be myself and explore my thoughts in my own way. She guided us to write poems and put on plays. She encouraged us to think for ourselves and she gave us the space in which to discover self-respect.

Now that we have discussed the five Elemental energies both as wisdoms and as self created realms of confusion let us look at how a contemplative and experiential training in these principles might help teachers to become more sensitive to the needs of their students.
CHAPTER 21 NOTES

1 Vidya in Tibetan is rigpa and its negation, avidya, is ma rigpa. "The nature of everything is open, empty and naked like the sky. / Luminous emptiness, without center or circumference: the pure, naked Rigpa dawns" (from The Tibetan Book of the Dead, quoted in Sogyal, 1992, p. 259). Padmasambhava says: 'The self-originated Clear light, which from the beginning was never born / Is the child of Rigpa, which is itself without any parents—how amazing!' (Sogyal, 1992, pp. 259-260).

2 Though every art form works with space or at least the metaphor of space, dance seems to be uniquely involved in playing directly with this most open and flexible of expressive mediums. The Canadian choreographer and co-founder of the Toronto Dance Theater, Patricia Beatty (1985), writes about the spontaneous birth of form out of open space in the creative process of making dances. Shafrenski (1985) gives us experiments in modern dance that could enliven and challenge any class of dancers or non-dancers. Morgenroth (1987) writes about improvisations, and Minton (1984) looks at body and mind in modern dance. Using dance in the classroom is a great way to access non-verbal modes of awareness and to heighten an appreciation for the power inherent in our psychological relationship to space.

3 Hall (1959), who spent many years in foreign service, observed the many layers of unspoken communication patterns in various cultures and writes about the kinds of miscommunication and confusion that can result between people of different cultures.

4 The various layers of our conditioned context that I have sketched here are said to be the result of accumulated past karma in the culture and philosophy of India and much of Asia. Yogananda (1946) as a young man yearning to be a renunciate felt the burden of his context, his family's expectations of him, and in particular an astrological prognostication that he would marry three times, twice to be a widower. In a moment of clear insight he burned the scroll containing the astrological prediction in a paper bag with these words on it: 'Seeds of past karma cannot germinate if they are roasted in the fires of divine wisdom.' He reiterates this point, quoting the words of his teacher: 'The deeper our self-realization, the more we influence the whole universe by our subtle spiritual vibrations, and the less we ourselves are affected by the phenomenal flux' (p. 173, altered to remove gender bias).

5 This is extracted from the offering section of the Sadhana of Mahamudra (prayer of the great symbol) written by Chogyam Trungpa in 1968. It is not available as a publication for general circulation.

6 Lao Tzu says: One who excels in traveling leaves no wheel tracks; One who excels in speech makes no slips; One who excels in reckoning uses no counting rods; One who excels in shutting uses no bolts yet what he has shut cannot be opened One who excels in tying uses no cords yet what he has tied cannot be undone. (Lao Tzu, Lau, trans. 1963)

7 Keirsey and Bates (1978) have organized the sensing and judging types from Jung's typology (four of the sixteen) into a group they identify as 'The Epimethean Temperament' after Epimetheus, a lesser-known Greek god, son of Zeus, brother of Prometheus and loyal husband to Pandora (loyal despite all the adversity this marriage caused). The qualities that Keirsey and Bates assign to this temperament are a strong sense of duty, hard-working, responsible, compliant with social norms, pessimistic, conservative and dependable, making them a pillar of strength and the backbone of society. Some of these qualities relate with the personality traits associated with the element of space, the animal realm, and the traditional phlegmatic temperament (Harwood, 1958; Littauer, 1983).


PART V

Conclusion
Chapter 22
Awakening to Intimacy
as Part of the Teacher’s Path

- Wind tunnel • Demons and demonesses • Mutual distraction • Intimacy = irritation • Initiations • Binding • Emptying out • Koans • Gap • Loving kindness • Riding the horse of energy • Multiple personality possibilities • Container • From furies to Eumenides • An angry, hungry lion • Patience • No big deal and no evaluation • Feeling the earth • A mad world can make a good meal •

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People, and above all children, may have not only much greater learning powers than we suspect, but also greater self-curing powers. Our outer task is to learn more about these powers, and how we may create conditions in which they may have a chance to work. This is one of the things that children may be able to teach us, if we are not always busy teaching them.

(John Holt, 1972, pp. 77-78)

To have peace, one must employ peaceful means; for if the means are violent, how can the end be peaceful? If the end is freedom, the beginning must be free, for the end and the beginning are one.

(Krishnamurti, 1953, p. 59)

The learning process involves both suffering and joy, fear and courage, insecurity and confidence. Every time we learn something we necessarily have to pass through a kind of dark wind tunnel of the unknown as we loosen our grip on what we do know and proceed into the shrouded mists of the unfamiliar. There, we are susceptible to being preyed upon by the elemental demons and demonesses of our own confusion, anger, insecurity, helplessness, arrogance, hunger, greed, grasping, fierce competitiveness and an endless stream of other constantly shifting emotions. If a teacher is sensitive to a student’s
state of mind, she can facilitate the learning process, helping the student to learn how to pass through this tunnel as if it were just a game of pretend. If a student gets stuck in the tunnel, caught up in believing that the demons and demonesses of his or her emotions are real rather than merely the exaggerated signposts and clues of the treasure hunt, a teacher who can identify with the student, a teacher who is open enough to feel what the student feels and at the same time understands the student's journey through considerable experience with her own very particular and personal tunnel, such a teacher trained in the intuitive practice of elemental wisdom can patiently attend the student or gently guide him through.

Elemental wisdom, therefore, involves a sense of play, a sense of humor as well as accurate empathy. If a teacher is not familiar with the tunnel himself, having never really examined his own learning process or the depths of his own emotions with close attention, then he may have not recognized some of the demons and demonesses as part of the game. Then, when the student gets lost in the tunnel, afraid or angry, acting out a drama with the demons, the teacher, too, will get caught up in the drama, believing that the child's demon and the emotional drama is real and actually threatens her as well as the student. When this happens the student is in control, and although he knows that he doesn't know where to go or how to handle the demon, he does know that he is in control of the teacher, and that in itself becomes a new game. In this game, both the teacher and the student end up wrestling with the pretend demons in the tunnel, and both of them forget why they went into the tunnel in the first place, and they can't get out. In this game they both learn how not to learn or, should I say, develop a habit of becoming distracted within the tunnel of learning, seldom to come out the other side.

Openness to a student's emotional process of learning and development demands a tremendous capacity to tolerate intimacy; and intimacy necessarily involves irritation, as another person's emotional sparks set fire to our own emotional process and this brings about the churning of elemental energies in the body and mind.
The idea of training teachers to become progressively more aware of their own emotional energies and their individually distinctive ways of relating to each of the five elemental styles can be seen as an extension of an ancient teaching tradition as well as an extension of the way in which psychotherapists and psychoanalysis are, ideally, trained. The structural anthropologist Levi-Strauss (1967) has noted the profound similarities between the practices and healing rituals of shamans and those of psychotherapy. In both, a deeply emotional participation by the healer is required in the drama of healing, and in order to train for this, shamans and psychotherapists both need to go through a process of initiation. Grossinger, summarizing this point, explains:

Shamanism and psychoanalysis share a training: for the shaman it is a dream vision experienced during initiation; for the psychiatrist it is his own psychoanalysis by another doctor. In either case, transmission from the previous generation is more important than explicit understanding of the methodology behind it.\(^1\)

Just as psychoanalysts must go through the same kind of abreaction that will later be part of the healing process for their patients, and shamans need to be initiated into the play of the demons and demonesses that are seen to be a cause of confusion and illness,\(^2\) I am proposing that teachers need to go through an emotionally intensified contemplative experience in order to heighten their awareness of their inner life, their emotional energies and their glimpses of the elemental wisdoms. Furthermore, the use of contemplative methods in teacher training is ideally just the beginning of a lifelong journey of exploring intuition and intimacy in the teacher student relationship.

The relationship between teacher and student is, to my way of thinking, the heart of the educational process. I do not wish to assert that teaching should be equated completely with psychotherapy and the traditional rôle of a healer or shaman, yet it seems that this comparison may yield insights concerning the journey of intimacy which could be invaluable to the teacher. There is a traditional analogy in Buddhism that equates the teacher or lama\(^3\) with a doctor, the suffering of samsara's recycling of dualistic entrapment as an
illness, and the teachings of dharma, designed to guide the student to self-liberation, as the medicine.

Though I have done some teaching, and aspire to do more, the majority of my professional experience has been in psychotherapy, and particularly in working with extreme states of mind labeled by our contemporary medical culture as psychosis and schizophrenia. I have done this work within the context of small therapeutic communities organized like a mandala around the recovery of one patient at a time. This model of encouraging recovery from psychosis is described by Podvoll (1990). My supervisor in this work once explained to me that our rôle was to join completely with our client and offer to him our strength and experience of working with our own extreme states of mind in order to help him ride out the nightmare of his journey toward recovery. As an analogy to this, he told me a story about how our mutual friend and teacher had witnessed a Native American healing ritual at the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota. In this ritual, the Lakota shaman actually bound himself physically to the afflicted person with the entire community of family and friends circled around them.4

Searles (1979) writes with insight derived from years of experience in the intensely intimate process of joining his patients on the journey through the wind tunnel of recovery from psychosis. A classically trained Freudian psychoanalyst, trained personally by Frida Fromm-Reichmann in the discipline which she refers to as intensive psychotherapy,5 he writes from his own experiences about the simultaneous healing, growth and development for therapist and patient.

The therapist finds himself involved so deeply in the same conflict concerning individuation, in the treatment relationship, that the individuation which eventually results can truly be called a mutual one. Only gradually do Patient and therapist become unafraid, each of his own world and of the other person's world. (p. 26)

Searles explains that the healing process seems to be directly correlated with an ability and willingness of the therapist and the patient to face their fear of intense intimacy.
Only through facing this fear together, moment to moment, day after day, in the long
course of the therapeutic relationship, do both patient and therapist come to realize that their
two worlds can be fully appreciated and fully shared.

The mindfulness and awareness which develop as a result of meditation and the
contemplative practices involved in cultivating elemental wisdom help one to become aware
of what one feels and thinks about another person. Having to do with what psychoanalysis
traditionally refers to as issues of transference and countertransference, Searles (1979)
points out that such a keen awareness of subtle shifts in one’s thoughts and feelings toward
another are vitally significant to the healing relationship.

...The perceptions that the therapist comes to have of the patient,
feeling laden, unusual, and at times highly contradictory, are of great
therapeutic significance. In a sense the patient’s own repressed self
images, his many highly contradictory, unrelated, unintegrated self
images, derived in large part from conflictual family rôles, become
integrated into a single, coherent, three-dimensional whole indirectly,
in the therapists developing image of him, an image which is enriched,
step by step, through the therapists seeing and responding to a
succession of different persons, so to speak in the patient. Following
along this indirect avenue, the patient becomes, increment by
increment, a whole and integrated human being, partially through
identification with the feeling image the therapist is developing, facet
by facet, of him. (p. 25)

The more a teacher has awareness of the subtle attitudes, preconceptions, feelings,
and fantasies that pervade her inner experience, the more she is able to read how these
might be influencing her students. The life-long journey of developing self-awareness
seems to move in a kind of spiral, developing upward only gradually, while cycling over
similar ground of personal issues again and again each time in a new and slightly
transformed way. Learning how to work with elemental energies is not something you do
once and then it is all over. On the contrary, working with elemental energy is ever
ongoing. The more you become proficient at turning raw elemental energy into wisdom,
the more energy you take on both from within as you open more deeply to yourself and from without as you open more deeply to others and take on wider and wider spheres of responsibility.

Concerning this ongoing process, Searles states that the therapist should always candidly acknowledge and confirm any truth in the patient’s distorted view of him, no matter how embarrassing or painful this may be. Psychotic patients, very much like children, can have an uncanny insight into the neurosis and emotional immaturity of those who are, from one perspective, labeled as their superiors, analysts or teachers. Teachers could benefit from taking this humble approach, as well. Teachers can also benefit from what Searles (1979) says concerning how the process of opening to intimacy continually challenges one’s tendency to form and hold preconceptions.

Above all, through working with him (the patient), the therapist is compelled to question, one by one, each of the tenants about human existence, individually and collectively, of which he has felt most unthinkingly sure. In this process we come eventually to realize that nothing about human beings and human behaviour can be assumed, can be taken for granted. (p. 27)

Such an emptying out of preconceptions is the core experience involved in all of the elemental wisdoms, and it is perhaps appropriate to state here that any tendency to regard the five wisdoms and six realms as just another way to categorize people is missing the point entirely, although this will inevitably happen and needs to be watched for and guarded against. To simply present to teachers the system of the five wisdoms and six realms as another categorisation of learning styles or personality types might encourage once again the reification of a theory, further numbing teachers to their own inherent wisdom. The process by which these teachings are assimilated through the silence of meditation and contemplative awareness is perhaps more important than what they are.

Bernard Glassman Sensei (Japanese for ‘teacher’) a Brooklyn-born aerospace engineer and Zen master of Jewish origin who is presently in the process of transforming
an inner-city community in the poorest section of Yonkers, New York, with housing projects for the homeless, job and educational opportunities, a hospice for people dying of AIDS, and other projects, has developed some original and effective ways of applying the insights of Buddhist meditation to social action. One of the ways he does this is by extending the approach that he learned in working with his *koan* practice into solving real life problems within a depressed community. In a recent talk, Sensei explained that to work with a *koan* in meditation practice and in life you must become one with the *koan*. Then he asked; ‘What is the self? What is become? What is the *koan*?’ He says that to work with any situation (from a non-dual wisdom approach) you must use the same method. In order to work with a problem, you must become that problem. In order to work with another person and that person’s predicament and suffering, you must become that person, become that predicament, become that suffering. Using the mandala principle as a way to talk about one’s total awareness sphere, Glassman said:

> When you become the situation it gets you to see the various aspects of the room that you are in, the situation, the mandala. Usually the room is dark to us, we need to turn the lights on. When we turn the lights on we see differently. *Koans* present problems that force us to see things from different positions in the room. Move your position in the mandala. To move into each sphere is to become that world.... Some *koans* force us to recognize the space of non-duality while others force us to deal with the diversity of relative reality so that we can walk comfortably and equally in both spheres at once.  

After Glassman Sensei and his Zen community began working with the homeless, they moved their *zendo* (Zen place of practice) and their residences from an upper-middle class neighbourhood into the community where they were working with these people. He and other members of the community have also developed a week-long Zen practice of living on the streets with the homeless as a way of entering more fully into the situation. Reminiscent of the vows of poverty which St. Francis initiated as part of his work with
the poor some five hundred years ago, it is refreshing to see such dedication and meaningful work in our own time.

Glassman has adapted the Tibetan teachings of the mandala of five elemental qualities or buddha families, particularly as they have been taught by Trungpa (1973, 1976) and presented here, as a way of describing what he calls the circle of life. In this scheme, the *buddha* family related with elemental space has to do with meditation practice or *zazen*, as they call it in their community. This includes not only the formal practice of sitting meditation, but also meditation in action or any life activity that can be used as a discipline for bringing one’s mind back to the present moment. Any activity at all can serve this function – from sweeping the floor, cooking a meal and doing dishes, to counselling someone, painting a picture or writing a poem. It is the training in mindfulness that can make an activity a contemplative activity. Next, the *vajra* family associated with elemental water becomes the sphere of study and learning, *ratna* associated with earth becomes the sphere of livelihood and practical financial concerns, *padma* related with fire becomes the integrative aspect of communication that binds a community together and *karma* associated with wind becomes social action. From Glassman’s example, it is possible to see that there are many possible applications of the mandala principle of five elemental wisdom qualities.

Returning to the learning process as a journey through a dark and unfamiliar wind tunnel, we have seen that Wilber (1980) describes the developmental process resulting in each step toward higher order and more inclusive structures of consciousness as beginning with a stage of dissatisfaction leading to disidentification and then a differentiation, and finally a reidentification at a more inclusive and holistic level. This corresponds to Piaget’s notions of equilibration, the seeking of a new equilibrium out of a feeling of incongruence between existing schemes and newly developed perception. In simpler terms, this could be described as the death of one way of being and the rebirth of a new way.

Learning, growing and developing all involve negotiating a transition from one state to another, a death and a rebirth. A good teacher attends patiently at the death like an
experienced nurse that knows all the signs of death approaching and intuitively feels with her patient the various stages of grief, pain and letting go. A good teacher assists this process when it is helpful and simply attends with a watchful eye when it is better to remain silent, impartial and removed, letting nature take her own course. Then a good teacher takes on the rôle of a midwife, attending at the birth of a new understanding, a new way of being. Again, her job is not to control the process, but to assist nature in her inevitable course by understanding the stages in the process and encouraging that process in any way that might be helpful. Furthermore, a good teacher can serve as a guide and companion for the struggles and emotional conflicts that occur in the gaps between the death of one way of being and the birth of another.

We have learned from the bardo teachings of the Tibetan tradition that whatever happens in this bardo sets the stage for the next instant, the next rebirth. The ultimate nature of this gap is a unitive holistic awareness that joins together our body energy with the energy of our environment as one process. This is the absolute unconditioned non-dual mind of a Buddha which is always present within our awareness. However when we fail to recognize it as such out of fear we can then become confused by the subtle forms of duality which spontaneously arise out of this mind, like clouds in a clear blue sky. Then as the five elemental wisdom lights appear in succession from space to water to earth to fire to air and back to space as a cycle we may also feel threatened by their intensity. And when the duller more comforting lights appear we have a choice. We can either accept the full intensity of the elemental wisdom lights which obliterate our sense of self as a reference point leading to experiencing our next instant from a free and open perspective or out of fear we may gravitate toward the softer, more comforting lights which lead to a reinstatement of the dualistic approach and rebirth imprisoned within one of the six realms.

The contemplative maitri space awareness practice heightens an experience of each particular elemental energy by encouraging an intuitive awareness of this micro-process of mind, while taking a fixed posture in a room painted and carpeted in one vibrant colour.
This practice, like the Zen practice of sitting meditation, involves voluntarily bringing the mind back to an awareness of the present moment as it naturally wanders away into flights of fantasy and cogitation.

Typically, what this practice does when repeated for several days is to allow people an opportunity to experience their emotions in an intensified manner. Like increasing the wattage supplied to light bulbs of various different colours, people experience increased elemental energy of the type that corresponds to the colour of room and posture of their practice. A person may repeat habitual patterns of thinking, speaking and acting that are uniquely their own within each heightened realm, yet because they are exaggerated, they cannot be ignored in the usual way, and the choice point of non-dual wisdom also becomes naturally more and more apparent as the exaggeration escalates.

It seems that in the process of growth and development, things have to get worse before they can get better. That is to say a transition period seems to exist between various levels and stages of development, and this transition period is characterized by heightened emotion, psychological turmoil, fear, anxiety, and a sense of internal chaos and struggle. Learning how to accommodate this internal struggle is the essence of the maitri practice. Maitri (loving kindness) is described by Trungpa (1973, 1976) as making friends with oneself. Ultimately this maitri and its more developed form, known as karuna (compassion), come from the unconditioned and luminous mind of empty space, or from gradually allowing such a boundless and brilliant state of mind to enter into our daily life experience. As Trungpa (1991) explains:

Just not dwelling on a point of reference provides a lot of space to be. Compassion is open space in which things can be accommodated. It contrasts strongly with our repulsing situations because we are not willing to accommodate anything. So compassion is creating open space, accepting things happening. (p. 89)

Accommodating and making friends with intense emotions of the five elemental energies is the first step, and perhaps the most difficult. The next step is to ride the energy
like an experienced equestrian might ride a wild horse, learning to manage increasing levels of elemental energy by opening further and further to one’s boundless connection with the greater environment. This opening process awakens greater and greater wisdom. Riding elemental energy means neither repressing it or acting it out, as Trungpa (1973) explains:

Expressing or acting out hatred or desire on the physical level is another way of trying to escape from your emotions, just as you do when you try to repress them. If one actually feels the living quality, the texture of the emotions as they are in their naked state, then this experience also contains ultimate truth. And automatically one begins to see the simultaneously ironical and profound aspects of emotions, as they are. Then the process of transmutation, that is transmuting the emotions into wisdom, takes place automatically. (p. 235)

Becoming accustomed to and learning how to ride the raw emotional energy of each of the five subtle elements can be likened to Jungian archetypal psychology (Jung 1967, 1968a, b) as well as Assagioli’s theory of subpersonalities (1965). In Assagioli’s psychospiritual system, each subpersonality or part of a person follows its own particular process of development from childhood toward becoming integrated into a healthy adult self. This self is then gradually relinquished as awareness expands further to develop beyond self into spiritual awakening. In the middle levels of development, these various subpersonalities need to be identified, accommodated and respected, each one by all the others, which is a bit like struggling with the interpersonal politics of an inner family, or an inner process of group therapy. To facilitate this process, a central space of open, unbiased awareness (similar to that cultivated in meditation and depicted within the centre of the Tibetan mandala) is surrounded by any number of these subpersonalities. Sliker (1992), an experienced psychosynthesis therapist, explains this subpersonality theory and the open-ended quality of the developmental process:

The ideal personality is a balanced set of subpersonalities in which each subpersonality is strong and its particular talents fully developed. Permanent balance of the subpersonalities is prohibited, first, by the waves of change in successive stages of inner growth, and second, by
the impact of ever-shifting environmental events. Each state of
disequilibrium can foster, on the one hand, chaos and complaint, or,
on the other hand, acceptance of the challenge to renew equilibrium,
strengthen mastery, and fight the inner battles that build what is called
character; whole effective subpersonalities are distilled in the fight,
and such qualities of courage, endurance, flexibility, and other
positive strong qualities. . . Thus it is fortunate that this ideal balance
is never achieved. (p. 66)

Assagioli (1965) also warns that ‘There are real dangers in the premature irruption
of unconscious forces in an unprepared and loosely knit personality’ (p. 68). This is an
important consideration in the design of any curriculum that would use the maitri space
awareness exercises as a way to train teachers in elemental wisdom. Included in any such
curriculum there must be ample opportunity for people to first prepare for the intensity of
emotional experience, with therapeutic group process led by an experienced therapist who
is familiar with the five elemental wisdom styles and with the psychology of meditation.
These groups then continue to meet during the practice to help people process their
intensified experiences. An experienced group leader should be able to spot people who
might have excessive difficulties with the practice and suggest various therapeutic exercises
and practices to prepare them to work with the increased emotional intensity.

The maitri space awareness practice is most powerful within the safe and contained
environment of a community retreat. If this is not possible, a very regularly scheduled
class within an educational community can also serve this same purpose of offering support
to members and a sense of boundary or container, creating an inner circle of shared
experience which fosters self-awareness. Listening to the feedback from others within the
circle of shared experience is an important part of the practice. Interpersonal interaction
increases the likelihood of experiencing momentary flashes of egoless elemental wisdom
amidst the generally heightened confusion of increased emotional intensity. Within the safe
circle of community members, one can explore intense emotions, knowing that they are
part of a learning process. Like the play of children which occurs within a specifically
prescribed context, denoting it as play, the dramas of intense emotions and interpersonal politics can be played out within the properly constructed boundaries of a therapeutic community, in a manner that is similar to a psychodrama. In psychodrama, one is given the opportunity to play out previously inhibited emotions within a context of play and heightened awareness. This play allows one to liberate the energy of the emotion and learn how to integrate it into the daily routines of one’s life. From the contemplative perspective it is not necessary that the emotions always be acted out or become fully manifest as neurotic behaviours. It is only essential that these emotions be felt fully within the psychological space of awareness and loving kindness in order to liberate their energy and eventually transform them into elemental wisdom.

Within a supportive therapeutic community, people are encouraged to take responsibility for their intensified emotional states relating to the five elemental styles. From this willingness to take responsibility and from the gradual process of disidentification or removing the self from intensified experiences of elemental qualities, the transmutation of these energies into wisdom begins.

In the Greek myth of Orestes and the Furies, Orestes abruptly stops Apollo from coming to his defense during his trial before the gods. Instead of allowing Apollo to make excuses for his behaviour, he bravely claims full responsibility for the murder of his mother. The gods are amazed that he does not blame them for the curse they had placed on his entire family as a punishment for his grandfather’s hubris. By taking full responsibility for his actions, Orestes dispels the multi-generational curse on his family and transforms the critical voices and cruel treatment of the hallucinatory Furies that tortured him into spirits of love and wisdom who bring good fortune, spirits known as the Eumenides. Peck (1978) uses this classical myth to demonstrate how neurotic symptoms, anxiety, and the internal suffering of mental illness are, in fact, the beginning of a natural cure — in fact, a sign of grace. "The fact that they are unwanted makes them all the more a phenomenon of
grace — a gift of God, a message from the unconscious, if you will, to initiate self-
examination and repair' (p. 293).

Teachers trained in this manner would begin to develop respect for this experience of grace, knowing that when they feel uneasy, anxious — perhaps a little frightened and groundless — they have again approached another threshold in their developmental spiral and have an opportunity to awaken the wisdom inherent within their experience of confusion. By familiarizing themselves with these feelings of awkwardness, uncertainty and the nakedness of an open mind not rooted in the past or clinging to the future, but fully open to the present moment, they will not be frightened when they pick up intuitively and emphatically on similar open states occurring in their students. Too often, teachers, educators, and parents lack the courage to follow children in their natural tendency to open their minds and wander. The self-curing powers which Holt (1972) says children and the rest of us have can arise naturally only within a supportive environment where the teacher is open enough and wise enough to allow this to happen. First, the outer boundaries of the sacred space must be firmly established. Clear structure and an atmosphere of discipline must be in place. Within this structure, great patience and an ability to tolerate apparent irritations and what often seems like total chaos allow for those magical moments of playfulness to occur when insight and awakening unfold.13

When teachers are not working to become aware of their unconscious fears, their tendency is to wield authority with a heavy hand, clamping down on any seemingly unnecessary chaos or confusion. If something is starting to happen in a way that is different from what they expect, it must be stopped, it must be controlled, it must be contained, or it must be redirected. Such adjustments in a classroom or in a private tutorial may be very subtle, but when they are added one upon the other, hour upon hour, day after day, they weave an iron chain of unspoken restrictions which slowly but surely strangle the life and curiosity out of most students. Krishnamurti (1953) tells us that authority which is ultimately based on fear, both within those that maintain it and those who are subjugated by
it, is the enemy of intelligence. He says 'The wise wield no authority, and those in authority are not wise' (p. 58).

The lessons of psychotherapy are again relevant to understanding what it is that children and adults need in order to find their own way of self-motivated exploration and play in order to discover the wisdom folded within their hearts. Richard Heckler, one of the founders of the Lomi school of body work, explains this exploration in this way:

When I work with people, I often encourage them to enter into their neurosis more fully. Not in the spirit of, "let's figure it out," or "Where did it come from?" but rather: "What is the actual feeling, the energy, the excitement in the neurosis? What are the sensations in it? What are the temperatures of it? What are the pulsations and rhythms of it, and how can that be worked with?" Of course, someone might feel, "Well, if I enter into that, I'm going to get more aggressive, or who knows what might happen?" Well it's true anything could happen. But I ask people to move into their conflicts in a way that allows them to feel their own excitement and energy. When I use the term "excitement," I am referring to what other cultures and traditions call Ki, chi, élan vital, prana — our most basic energy of aliveness. It is the ground from which all our living emerges.14

I recently led a group of eight children ranging from age two-and-a-half to seven in doing some playful and dramatic movement exercises. As we bounced around the room like kangaroos, lumbered like bears into a river to catch fish, and flew like eagles soaring over the coastline, there was one boy who seemed to want to either bump into everyone else, to knock them down, or to take a bite out of their hoisted rear-ends. As the rest of us came to a natural resting point, he was ready for more and wanted to show us how he could be a lion. So I gathered the others as an audience, and he proceeded to act out a lion stalking, chasing, catching and devouring an antelope. The devouring part lasted the longest. He gripped a small cushion between his teeth and proceeded to shake his head violently, while leaping and posturing all around the room, growling furiously and drooling. It was quite a show. The rest of us were transfixed by it. We let him continue
until he finally became exhausted or bored; it was hard to tell which. Then everyone else wanted to give it a try.

If I could choose one word to describe what I think the ultimate value of contemplative training in elemental wisdoms might be for teachers, it would be patience. If nothing else but a deep and abiding patience is learned from the practice it would be more than worthwhile. For in my long and rocky life as a student I have found that the one quality I look for in a teacher is an ability to cheerfully endure the most difficult interactions without becoming aggressive, even with the most subtle forms of manipulation and control. There is a saying in the Mahayana teachings of Tibetan Buddhism that patience is the greatest armour against aggression, no matter whether it is your own or someone else's anger; whether from the stirring of elemental energies within or from without, it makes no difference.

The more subtle forms of aggression have to do with issues of domination, authority, and endless clever ways of manipulating others to do things your way, whether or not it is ultimately in their best interest. Teaching is a profession that can be, at its worst, organized around these notions and, at best, constantly courts the edge of these subtle aggressive tendencies of schooling and indoctrination. Meditation and maitri space awareness practice could help teachers to slow down and detach from their own agenda in order to see and feel the process of each student as a unique unfolding. Alert for any signs of aggressive authority in their teaching practice they also become alert to the natural collective wisdom of the class and learn to yield to this natural force of the group as teacher.

By no means do I believe that authority in and of itself is an evil. Unlike Krishnamurti, who told us that wisdom and authority are mutually exclusive, I would like to venture to say that there is a need for authority that is wise. But perhaps instead of calling it authority we should call it confidence. Teachers with a naturally dignified and gentle confidence derived from their sensitivity to the elemental energies may create a complementary yearning in their students. Someone who has tamed the clarity of water
knowledge, who draws upon the richness of their connection with the earth, who glows with the fires of compassion and has learned to ride the active power of the wind, someone who is comfortable with the quivering intensity of open space, inspires students simply by being fully who they are. Such a teacher draws out the hidden potentials in their students like a magnet. In such an atmosphere of mutual respect, learning becomes a celebration filled with surprises and playfulness, instead of the drudgery of busy work in the hard-edged atmosphere of competition and self-proclaiming.

The practical application of elemental wisdom may not, in the end, be all that spectacular in its moment-to-moment manifestation, nor could it ever be, to my mind, anything that can produce immediate and recognizable results that might be measured upon some evaluation scale. Like the confidence of the Buddha, who is said to have touched the earth to indicate her as his sole witness when asked how he knew that he had achieved complete enlightenment, this unconditioned confidence is self-evaluating. Only from the inner measuring of our deepest search for personal integrity, in our every move, our every word and every thought, only in the challenge of facing our fear of intimacy, opening over and over again to the elemental awareness of others who share our space, only in the deep inner calm of uniting the dynamic forces of heaven and earth in our authentic presence can we begin to glimpse that unconditioned confidence that has no need of any evaluation. Like the light of the sun that shines directly out, this level of confidence has no need to look back upon itself.

The ecological movement has a few undying themes which, if we are to survive on this planet, I hope will grow in the hearts of those young people who will inherit the mess that we have passed on to them. Of these themes, I believe the most profound and urgent to be, as David Suzuki has said in summarizing the message of his recent book *Wisdom of the Elders* (Suzuki & Knudtson, 1992), a reverence for our home, the earth, and all animate and inanimate kin who share it with us. Such deeply felt reverence is fundamental if we are to be moved to make a change. Indigenous people from all parts of the globe have
practiced wisdom traditions that regard nature as sacred. These traditions are based in deeply felt, emotionally charged experiences grounded in the body. Suzuki repeats a vignette, told to him by James Gosnell, a chief of the Nishga’a people of north coastal British Columbia. He told Suzuki of his first encounter with clear-cut logging in his homeland. He had been walking through the forest when he suddenly came to a clearing where there were no trees. As far as he could see in front of him the ground had been scorched to burn off the debris and was marred by the tracks of the huge machines used in removing the logs. Gosnell told Suzuki: ‘I couldn’t breathe. It was as if the land had been skinned of life. I couldn’t believe that anyone would deliberately do that to the earth’ (p. XXVI).

I recently had a similar experience while walking with my baby boy on my shoulders into a new subdivision perched on a wooded hill neighbouring my home. As we walked up, along what seemed to me a fresh wound, cut out of the fragile boreal forest, oozing with mud and little rivulets of ground water eroding the soil, huge earth movers chewed their way up the slope, pressing further into a place where loggers had already cut down trees, and small scattered fires were burning the debris. I felt sick to my stomach, and my heart ached with a combination of sadness and anger. Yet I live in a house on land and drive to it on roads that were cleared in a similar manner only ten years ago. As I am fully a product of North American culture, I have inherited to a greater or lesser degree the lifestyle based on an attitude that conquers nature through technology and a reductionistic view. In other words, for better or worse, I find myself to be dependent upon electricity, central heating, sewage, garbage collection and my backyard barbecue.

We are beginning to understand that we may have to change ourselves and the way we perceive our place within the greater cycles of nature, and to feel that our planet and the greater universe beyond it, the processes of nature in all her interconnected parts, animate and inanimate, including ourselves, are all one body and one mind. To engender the deepest respect and reverence for each and every aspect of this unified body/mind, as the wisdom traditions of our ancestors have taught us to do for centuries, is essential if we
wish to truly turn around the momentum of madness, hatred, destruction, pollution and erosion proliferated by our fragmented ways of thinking and behaving.

I believe our priorities in educating young people must shift in order to re-awaken a sense of inherent sacredness, the sacredness of our own experience as well as the sacredness of every living and non-living thing. Too often I have felt trapped in an imaginary debate, trying to justify why this is important, when the more urgent issue, I believe, at this point is how. How do we bring to education this kind of profound respect for the interconnectedness of all things? How do we go forward toward an awareness that joins together the wisdom of ancient and living sacred traditions and an acute awareness of holistic systems with an acceptance of our scientific, technological, political, social and cultural heritage?

If we are to allow our children to feel the processes of nature within them and around them as sacred, perhaps we ourselves, as their teachers, need to become open, as they are, to the elemental energies that ebb and flow through our being, uniting us with the 'way' of nature, the eternal and changeless tao. In the play of the elements there is no 'me' and no 'you'; there is only raw experience, fresh and alive. The power of the elements has no concern for our petty educational projects and curricula. It works its own magic far greater than our ability to see or know; and our job as teachers, as educators, as therapists, is to allow this to happen. By metaphor I have attempted to explain that the power of transformation, the power of evolution and development exists in the power of the elements. And elemental wisdom is nothing more than allowing this power to come and go through you and around you, without disturbing it.

Not to disturb the transformative powers of water, earth, fire, air and space is essentially not to be afraid of them, within ourselves or within our environment. But because elemental transformation involves necessarily conflict, chaos, death and destruction, the elemental energies can be threatening to our sense of security, our sense of self-preservation, and our sense of self. Facing that fear in all its various manifestations,
feeling it like a cold, wet wind on our faces or tasting it like a chili pepper, is the daily practice which gradually reconditions us. If we are to respect the elemental powers and inquisitive yearnings of each individual child as sacred, we must first face our own fears, fears of ourselves and fears of our world.

As a young boy, like many other boys and girls, I felt the rhythm of nature in my heart. I felt united with the sky above and the earth at my feet. I heard the song of the rocks and the song of the junipers and ponderosas. Then I went to school. I sat in a desk and I learned to read. And gradually I learned that I didn't 'know' anything and that I had to fill up my head with knowledge if I wanted to be like everyone else, if I wanted to belong to my society, and if I wanted to survive.¹⁷

Now somewhere deep inside there is a part of me that is angry, angry and resentful that I ever allowed myself to be indoctrinated into this madness of the twentieth-century. Yet, in another way, I know that it is only by understanding the madness firsthand in my bones and in my every breath, through madly perpetuating the cycles of its pathological epistemology myself and suffering from its symptoms in my own life experiences, only from this inner knowledge and the small but precious wisdom gained in my own gradual healing and awakening, that I am able to communicate these ideas which I hope may guide others toward awakening from the greater nightmare that we all share together.

I wish to express the same sentiments as Glassman Sensei has expressed in speaking of his work to uplift depressed inner city communities:

I have no sense of utopias. I don't imagine an end to all wars or even an end to poverty. I see it as an endless path, starting from right here, where we are. Here are the ingredients we've been given. How can we make the best meal?¹⁸

The ingredients which teachers can bring to their work are their own struggles and emotional confusion. Let us conclude now with a brief look at how a contemplative teacher training program might look.
CHAPTER 22 NOTES

1 Grossinger (1980), p. 93. According to Eliade (1964), the initiation of a shaman involves going through a phase of dismemberment and resurrection, or what we might call an experience of death and rebirth. Heinze (1991) says ritual dismemberment occurs in only half of the various initiations she has observed or studied around the world. Nonetheless, in one way or another, through the initiation experience shamans are introduced to the spiritual and psychic powers that enable them to perform their work. This dramatic initiation, however, is more than likely the culmination of a long apprenticeship and training: ‘Most shamans have undergone prolonged periods of physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual training during which their ego becomes service oriented so that they can become the vehicle and translators of transcendental knowledge’ (Heinze, 1991, p. 156). Heinze, who profiles a number of 20th-century shamans, including educated city dwellers as well as traditional ‘primitive’ and tribal shamans, gives us three criteria which establish a shaman as one who: (1) can access alternate states of consciousness at will, (2) fulfills community needs which otherwise are not met, and (3) serves as a mediator between the sacred and the profane.

2 Heinze (1991) explains: ‘shamans work at least on five different levels. Aside from the physical-biological level, they consider also the emotional-psychological level, the social as well as the mental-intellectual-philosophical-moral, and the spiritual levels. Harmony has to be established between all five levels’ (p. 206). She further tells us that shamans are called upon to deal with crisis on all levels, which they address often by crossing over from one level into another in various ways, including story telling, ritual, and symbolic manipulations that communicate archetypal psychic energy from one level to another. By designing unique rituals that dramatize the process of illness or crisis and its symbolic resolution, a release of distorted or knotted tension occurs, establishing the possibility for a new order and balance in the system. Most importantly, ‘The emotional involvement of the client is reinforced and becomes the driving force in the healing process’ (p. 207). Laderman (1991) reports and comments on such ritual dramas of healing as performed in the highly sophisticated shamanistic and humoural system of Malaysia.

3 Podvoll (1990) notes, concerning the time he spent with the Lakota people, that: ‘I learned how such healing communities (medicine circles) can arise spontaneously and function with great simplicity and dignity. And I recognized an essential element of these small gatherings: Although they are ostensibly dedicated to the recovery of one individual, in reality they are committed to the health and well-being of the entire community and every individual in it’ (p. 222). For more on healing rituals, practices and visionary experiences of the Lakota (Sioux) way of the Chumupa (Sacred Pipe) see Black Elk and Lyon (1990), which is the narrative of Wallace Black Elk, a living master of this tradition. There has recently been some controversy around the authenticity of an earlier work (Neihardt, 1932), as Neihardt was a poet and may have used some poetic licence in translating the stories and visions of Nicholas Black Elk (no, a blood relation of Wallace Black Elk but acknowledged as a spiritual ‘grandfather’). While Neihardt’s book concentrates on the visionary aspects of Lakota shamanism, Steinmetz (1984) looks into Lakota rituals, meditation and spirituality. Lyon (p. xiii) also mentions two autobiographical accounts, Erodes and Fire Lame Deer (1972) and Mails and Chief Eagle (1979), which also shed some light on the experiences of Lakota shamans.

4 Intensive psychotherapy, a psychoanalytic approach which can involve as many as five or six hourly sessions a week in an attempt to heal people who suffer from major forms of mental illness such as schizophrenia, was developed by Fromm-Reichmann (1950) and is described in her book Principles of Intensive Psychotherapy. This particular branch of psychoanalysis has of late been almost completely lost as a living practice outside of a few individuals who have maintained it in the face of the biomedical model of psychiatry, which has tended to dominate the field since the mid-1960s. From this perspective, the human intimacy approach of intensive psychotherapy is seen as not being cost-efficient, while billions of dollars worth of questionable drug therapies and oppressive hospital environments are the status quo.

5 Sinnott (1989), writing from the perspective of General Systems Theory, also acknowledges that ‘just as two persons co-construct their knowledge of each other, an individual system and a social system co-
create their knowledge of each other, act on that knowledge basis, and thereby co-create each other' (p. 65).


To read about how St. Francis worked with the poor, see Brooke (1970), Erickson (1970) and the works of St. Francis and Clare in Armstrong and Brady (1982).

Group process like therapeutic community (see note 11 below), might occur spontaneously but generally there are leadership skills and wisdom involved in allowing events to unfold, so that a number of individuals become a group bound together by deep caring and respect. When people open to see the unconditioned wholesome quality in one another, a sacred space comes into being. Within this space, transformations happen naturally. Moustakas (1968) discusses the irony of loneliness in intimate groups. Dimock (1986) and Posthuma (1989) provide ideas and instructions for group development, leadership and process. Archer (1984) looks at how the impetus for change arises out of the collaborative process. True community seems to me bittersweet; and since the bitter comes first, I often miss the sweet.

Bateson (1972), in 'A Theory of Play and Fantasy,' tells us how monkeys engaged in playful combat have framed their interactions by signaling to each other that 'this is play.' This frame, he says, tends to precipitate paradox. Messages pertaining to emotional states within the frame have a different meaning than those same messages would have outside the frame. Bateson suggests that certain symptoms of schizophrenia such as 'word salad' can be described in terms of the patient's failure to recognize the metaphoric nature of his fantasies. When this frame-setting process is confused or omitted, the metaphor or fantasy is narrated and acted upon in a manner which would be appropriate if the fantasy were a message of the more direct kind.' (p. 190). Another example of this same principle of framing occurs when a certain style of humour is funny for some people while for others it is taken as an insult. Within specific frames of reference we can let down our habitual defenses and we can laugh at ourselves admit our faults and grow. Bateson explains that the process of psychotherapy resembles play in many ways and that the efficacy of the process seems to be the result of a skill in shifting frames of discourse in order to fashion together an evolving system of interaction. Turner (1983) states that, 'Playfulness is a volatile, sometimes dangerously explosive essence, which cultural institutions seek to bottle or contain ... the wheel of play reveals to us ... the possibility of changing our goals and, therefore, the restructuring of what our culture states to be reality' (quoted in Woodman, 1985, p. 182). In relation to our theme of non-dual awareness a real expert on play, David (age 5) is reported to have said to Donaldson (1990) after an afternoon of tumbling, wrestling and cloud watching, 'play is when we don't know that we are different from each other.' I remember thinking, as a child of eight or so, that if I could just regard my life as a big game it would be a lot easier to get through it.

Glasser (1977) gives a retrospective history of therapeutic community, showing it to be a kind of archetypal healing and spiritually nurturing form arising throughout history as a spontaneous response to sick and imbalanced societies. Glasser quotes Philo Judaeus (. . B.C.E.- 45 C.E.), 'They are called therapeutes and therapeutides ... because they profess an art of medicine more excellent than that in general use in cities, for that only heals bodies, but the other heals souls...' (p. 311; also quoted in O'Sullivan, 1991). In modern times the idea of therapeutic community was reinvented by the charismatic Scottish social-psychiatrist Maxwell Jones (1956, 1968). Jones believed that the collective wisdom of a group has everything it needs to heal its members, as long as there is respect for an open and democratic process. O'Sullivan (1991) reporting on how Jones in his later years worked as a consultant with Heronbrook Hou. a psycho-spiritual community in the west Midlands of England, says: 'During his visits he inculcated in me and the whole community the need for a movement from self-centred, to a group-centred, a community-centred and finally a cosmos-centred orientation, as essential to the full utilisation of the principles of therapeutic community' (p. 205).

The practice of psychodrama developed by J. Moreno (see Moreno, J., 1946; Moreno, Z., 1959) establishes an 'imaginary reality' within which one can explore various problematic behaviours and communication patterns in order to step outside oneself, gaining a more objective view of oneself, which in itself induces change. Corsini (1966) summarizes the use of role playing in psychotherapy and lists 153 titles on the topic in an annotated bibliography.

As we have seen, the natural oscillation of chaos and order together compose the rhythm of development and learning. Chaos allows for the death of old and inadequate structures of order. Then appropriate order springs spontaneously from an openness to the creative power of chaos. For a more
in-depth examination of how principles of order and chaos are interpreted within the Tibetan Mandala system see Trungpa (1991). I believe that wisdom implies an awareness and acceptance of this natural process as it is experienced through emotional energies felt in the body. For a thorough treatment of wisdom in the body, see Murphy (1992). Natural play seems to exemplify this pattern of chaos and order more than any educational strategy that adults could ever develop. In writing about how to play with children, Donaldson (1990, pp. 14-15) quotes Böhm and Peat (1987, p. 52), who say that 'play, it appears, is of the very essence of thought.' Donaldson explains that we as adults need to let go of our conditioned resistance and our fear of play. Too often, as confirmed adults, teachers tend to want to manage play, police play, organize play, coach play or make play competitive. Too many adults remain, as he says, 'ignorant of play's messages and patterns.' 'Play,' Donaldson says, 'requires that we let go of our roles and expand ourselves trustingly into the unknown.'


15 Wise leadership seems to have more to do with being rather than doing and more to do with receptivity rather than any force of will. As we have learned from Lao Tzu: 'Whoever takes the empire and wishes to do anything to it I see will have no respite. The empire is a sacred vessel and nothing should be done to it. Whoever does anything to it will ruin it; whoever lays hold of it will lose it' (Lau, 1963, p. 87). I once coordinated a workshop led by Max Jones (see note 11 above and Whiteley, 1991, pp. 194-5) and noted in him a quiet power that had to do with his deep respect for democratic process. My colleague in therapeutic community work, Jeff Fortuna (see also Whiteley, 1991, pp. 195-8), likewise glimpsed in a quiet conversation with Max '...his fathomless trust in the intelligence and power of human community open to any experience and any communication. The power of his compassion that fuelled his ability to skilfully facilitate the development of such a community was moving to witness. He held the command of active leadership with the hand of humble surrender to the community beyond him.'

John P. Miller (1992) writes, 'A spiritual curriculum is based on the concept of interconnectedness and allows the student to witness and make a series of connections. Six types of connections that form the basis of a spiritual curriculum include analytic-intuitive, body-mind, subject-subject, community, earth, and self-connections' (p. 43). Miller also agrees with the position I have taken: 'Spiritual education, however, cannot be reduced to six connections or a set of techniques. Ultimately it must come from the teacher's self.' See also J.P. Miller (1981a, b, 1988). Palmer (1983) comes to similar notions of holistic and spiritual education from his background as a contemplative Quaker, and Plunket (1990) criticizes conventional educational approaches insightfully from a holistic and spiritual perspective.

17 'The child is the spiritual builder of humankind, and obstacles to his free development are the stones in the wall by which the soul of humanity has become imprisoned' (Maria Montessori, quoted on the cover of the Holistic Education Review, Vol. 3, no. 2, Summer 1990).

Chapter 23
Teacher Training

• Bridge the gap • Two year program • Rite of passage: students reborn as teachers • Well trained facilitators • Structured small group process • Non-judgemental atmosphere • Meditation • Self-parenting • Retreat • Mindfulness cutting carrots • Maitri space awareness postures • Internship journals of internal process • Guidance and supervision • Child development includes playing at being a child • Introduction to holistic philosophy • Pick a mystical tradition to open you to intuition • Reverence for a world elemental and good •

How could the study and practice of elemental wisdom become part of a teacher training program? My vision of how this might be accomplished involves integrating meditation and a contemplative approach into all aspects of a teacher training program. In what follows I will make some general suggestions. I will not attempt to present a comprehensive teacher training program; rather the contemplative psychology courses which I am presenting could be understood as the educational foundations component of such a program while the courses in curriculum and instruction dealing with specific teaching methods are not within the scope of this work so I will mention them only in passing.

I see such contemplative teacher training as a two-year program. In between the two academic years there would be a ten- or twelve-week summer term serving as the maitri space awareness retreat. This is the kind of program that people would choose to do because they are attracted to the contemplative approach, training in intuition and the holistic philosophy of education. It might be part of an innovative institute or a more traditional university but in either case the students would need to know what they were getting into and make a conscious choice that this program is right for them. In what follows I describe the group process component of such a program, something of the maitri
space awareness retreat, suggestions for a two-term contemplative course in child and adult
development and some; for a two-term course in holistic philosophy and mystical
spirituality.

Although the maitri space awareness practice and mindfulness awareness meditation
would be the contemplative heartbeat of such a program for training teachers in elemental
wisdom, these practices whether done as a retreat or as part of a structured course in a
university setting need to be set within a specific context. To bridge the cultural gap
between Buddhist meditation practice and the typical North American university student I
am presenting some ideas for introspective courses designed to prepare teachers in training
both intellectually and emotionally for the maitri space awareness practice. In addition to
preparation before maitri space awareness practice and careful attention during the training
it is also important to finish in such a way that brings a sense of accomplishment and
closure. After having been introduced to the nebulous intuitive experience of the elemental
energies teachers in training would need to ground their experience through teaching
internships, supervision, keeping a teacher's journal, and master classes taught by
experienced teachers in specific methods of teaching. In this way a contemplative teacher
training program would have three phases beginning with a phase of introduction and
preparation; two terms, then the maitri space awareness retreat lasting one term, and finally
the practical training perhaps two terms long as a place to integrate the new awareness of
oneself as a teacher. This way of structuring the program makes it similar to traditional
ceremonies which mark a rite of passage. In this case the student is reborn as the teacher
through the transformative experience of the maitri space awareness retreat.

The introspective curriculum that would serve as a context for introducing maitri
practice would involve several courses of study all of which would interrelate and revolve
around the personal life journey of the training teachers with the ultimate aim being to guide
them in drawing out their own unique teaching style from within the wisdom energy of
their personal experience.
In telling some of my own story in Chapter 1 I explained some details of the Naropa Institute Training in contemplative psychotherapy as it was in 1981-82 as well as the program in systems family therapy at the Kantor Institute as it was in 1985-86. My primary reason for presenting these two programs was to introduce the idea that a teacher training program could foster a personal transformation in the experience of the teacher-in-training. If the maitri space awareness practice works for training psychotherapists (Evans, 1993) why not for training teachers? With hindsight I realize that there were some drawbacks to the Naropa program and in contemplating my vision of a teacher training program I hope to address some of these. In particular, I think the students need to be adequately prepared for the possible temporarily disturbing effects of the maitri space awareness practice.

In order to create a safe environment for people to explore the elemental wisdom energies I believe it is essential that the teachers and facilitators of such a program be thoroughly trained themselves in some form of mindfulness-awareness meditation and specifically in the maitri space awareness practice. Why? Because with this training I believe they would be more able to see diamonds in the rough. Having worked with arousing elemental energies themselves they can be more sensitive, tolerant, encouraging and skilled in guiding others to explore their own wisdom in the raw experience of emotions. These facilitators also need to be professionally trained and skilled in identifying developmentally based psychological distortions such as those stemming from physical sexual or emotional abuse. They would also need to be knowledgeable and skilled in a variety of ways of offering help to people wishing to overcome the present manifestations of past trauma.

Looking back on my experience at the Naropa Institute it seems to me that there was an unstated assumption, ironic as it might have been, that meditation and Space Awareness practices were more or less sufficient and that therapy proper was not necessary for the training of therapists and helping professionals. I disagree with this assumption now and I
believe there have been some changes in their program since the time when I was there. For the training of teachers, however, I have struggled with this question going back and forth in my mind as to what rôle therapy as such might play in a teacher training program. Ultimately I am interested in creating a territory that overlaps the realms of therapy and education, erasing at least in part the boundary between them. I have a notion that an educational experience could be designed and taught that combines personal process work with more conventional intellectual learning.

The practical problem with this idea is one of timing and the readiness of individual students to grow and change. In my practice of doing one-on-one psychotherapy this issue of timing and readiness I have found to be the one aspect of my clients that makes the most difference in their work with me. Clients who come to therapy to work through problems that cause them real pain in their lives are ready to pay for the help and ready to work on themselves. Because they are aware of their pain they want to change. Whereas for the people referred to me who are either not aware of their psychological pain or not aware of how they themselves are responsible for structuring the apparent struggle in their lives, progress is much slower. In group therapy, however, there is a community principle in operation that seems to open up and accelerate those who are less ready while also summoning from the forerunners compassionate and caring responses which also challenge them to expand their awareness of themselves in relationships with others. The compromise I have come to, therefore, is to structure a specific kind of small group process into a teacher training program. Whereas the group process at Naropa during my time was non-structured and in my opinion too open, my notion is ideally to wed personal process with specific educational goals. These goals and the nature of the group would change with each term or semester over the course of the program. One of the educational goals of the first term would be preparing people to work on themselves both through teaching specific principles of development and heightening introspective awareness.
The structured small group process would begin with biographical writings and journal entries in order for students to begin to come to terms with their past, their families and their schooling in order to open to their personal experience of being a child. Students could share as much or as little of their writings with the group as they would choose in order to create a non-threatening, non-invasive process, although a presentation of a personal genogram and a minimum participation in disclosure and discussion would be expected. The goal of this phase would be to form bonds together as a community through personal story telling and to raise into awareness specific childhood issues, both personal and universal, that become the working basis for understanding who we are as maturing adults and who we are as teachers. In such a program, that focuses on healing and transformation, what normally might be considered embarrassing aspects of one’s past or negative personality traits would be re-framed as the working basis or the personal wounds out of which wisdom and compassion arise. In this way a psychological safe place is created for personal disclosure by welcoming all aspects of the past and present in a non-judgemental atmosphere wherein the dualistic notions of good and bad are no longer valid.

The second term of the small group process portion of the program would concentrate on learning and practicing contemplative and therapeutic exercises designed to facilitate the personal process of healing and self-awareness. Such exercises serve as a kind of catalyst to evoke capacities of the inner healer or ‘inner self helper’ within the unconscious to go to work in an unseen, organic process that goes on twenty-four hours a day. In addition to the structure of these exercises there would also be time for continuing with unstructured group process and community building. During this phase participants would concentrate on telling stories of the present relating to one another any struggles in their lives from week to week which they feel challenged to work on and to overcome. The basic meditation of mindfulness/awareness practice could be introduced at this time in these small groups. Participants could also be encouraged to practice meditation at home for some time every day and to extend the discipline of mindfulness/awareness into their daily
life. Other exercises, some more therapeutic in nature, would serve to help participants identify different ego states or sub-personalities within themselves and then work to facilitate the communication process between these various intra-psychic entities in order to mediate conflicts moving toward harmony between parts and eventual integration. Exercises to identify and heal the so called 'inner child' ego states (Kirsten & Robertiello, 1978; Whitfield, 1987; Bradshaw, 1990; Capaccchione, 1991) are most useful. Also, exercises to identify and work with negative and nurturing parent ego states (Woolams & Brown, 1978) could lead toward re-parenting or self-parenting techniques (Weiss, 1991). Exercises from Transactional Analysis (Goulding & Goulding, 1976, 1982; Woolams & Brown, 1978), feminist therapies (Ernst & Goodison, 1981, Carotenuto, 1981, 1986; Laidlaw & Malmo, 1990), Gestalt Therapy (Stevens, 1971), Art Therapy (Capaccchione, 1988; Fincher, 1991; Steward & Kent, 1992; Diaz, 1992) and Psychosynthesis (Assagioli, 1965; Ferrucci, 1982) could all be used here depending on the specific needs of each group.

During the mahtri space awareness portion of the program whether it was an intensive retreat or done as part of a class format the small groups would continue to give the students a place to work with any intense emotional reactions that might come up as a result of the practice. The specific educational goal of this portion of the program would be to help the students to discover their own unique wisdom potentials within their experience of emotional energy and confusion. The teachings which I have presented here on the five wisdoms could be taught as part of the structured lecture and study while discussion of personal experience would be the main focus in the small groups.

Ideally the mahtri space awareness practice would take place during a group retreat which would allow participants more freedom to fully engage the process. Separating from the hectic pace of daily life for the sole purpose of looking at oneself and allowing oneself to unwind creates a rare and precious opportunity not often found in educational programs. The container of the retreat defines a safe place to let go of conventional expectations and explore emotional energies free from the need to perform or to be anything other than who
you are. The sense of community and the power of community as a multi-dimensional agent of transformation is also heightened on retreat where participants live, work, sleep, study, eat, breathe and meditate together.

In chapter one I described some of my experience while on the maitri space awareness retreat. Such a retreat might last for ten or twelve weeks and could very well happen as a summer intensive between two academic years of teacher training. The retreat would begin and end with intensive practice in mindfulness/awareness meditation in order to set a contemplative tone creating an atmosphere of silence and heightened awareness of personal process. Meal preparation, cleanup and basic housekeeping chores can be assigned on a rotating schedule and people can be encouraged to engage in this work as a contemplative discipline extending their mindfulness/awareness practice into cutting carrots and scrubbing bathrooms. In addition to the sitting practice of meditation participants could develop walking meditation practice both indoors and out and work with physical disciplines such as beginning yoga or martial arts like Tai-Chi, and Aiki-do. After an initial six to eight days of this, participants would begin the maitri space awareness practice by taking the specific posture in one of the five maitri space awareness rooms for two fifty-minute periods daily. The practice in the room is very simple: be there, and if you notice that your mind has strayed, come back to the sensations of being in the posture and being in the room with your senses open and alert. Outside the room as the days go on the particular emotions of each elemental energy can become stronger and stronger making it harder and harder to ignore them in the way we normally do. This is when the opportunity comes to learn how to relax with the energy and glimpse the wisdom instead of the confusion that results in attempting to get rid of the energy by either acting it out or suppressing it. Each participant spends eight to ten days concentrating on one of the five elemental energies. During this time participants continue their work schedule, two one hour periods of sitting meditation: first thing in the morning and before supper in the evening, their chosen physical discipline, group process, and some study and lecture
periods. Some days off sandwiched in-between simplified days of meditating together as a group punctuate the transitions from one elemental energy to the next.

Practising in this way to heighten the elemental energies people can experience a lot of social turmoil living in a community. In my experience of three such retreats there has been everything from the normal irritations that people experience with each other in close quarters to full scale mutiny and political power struggles. I have also seen celebrations before days off become chaotic with substance abuse and men fighting. Passion also manifests as people couple-up or break-up and hearts get opened or broken. These kinds of things happen in any school of education, however, the difference here is that it is all included within the learning experience. On such a retreat nothing happens that is not contained within a field of heightened awareness that acknowledges it all as the working basis from which wisdom arises. Wise leadership, gentle and accommodating yet firm and disciplined, is essential. The leaders must know how to properly engage with the chaos of the moment while maintaining a calm detachment and a clear sense of the overall vision of wisdom energy which inspires others.

If a retreat is impossible a similar intensity can be created by focussing on the small group process as a cauldron of transformation. If the group meets twice a week or more for three-hour blocks for ten weeks a certain amount of elemental power as a community can be generated and maintained. People would need to agree to do some daily meditation practice at home as well as practicing the maitri space awareness postures. With this kind of class format it might be possible for everyone to practice the same posture at the same time which synchronizes everyone together in their experience. If the maitri rooms are not available then students can take the posture for two fifty-minute periods a day at home with a cloth or some other form of the appropriate colour covering their visual field.

In the group meetings the teachings that I have presented on the five elemental wisdoms would be given in a series of lectures each timed with the particular posture being practised. Some of the group time could also be used to engage in specific activities which...
would be designed to heighten the emotional energy of each elemental wisdom. For example while doing the earth posture the group could plan, prepare and eat a meal together, play music, sing, dance and celebrate. While doing the water posture people could spend some time discussing international politics and diplomacy and another class taking a slow and silent nature walk observing as much detail as possible to write down in their journals. A time for free socializing followed by a detailed analysis of ‘who said what to whom and what did you feel then’ could highlight the energy of fire. While a time for the preparation and presentation of art projects, dramatic presentations, and music recitals could evoke a sense of fire wisdom. A simulation of war or political intrigue or any competitive activity could raise the level of wind energy while working together for a common cause might reveal a glimpse of the wisdom of air. While some of these activities might be useful in highlighting the particular elemental energy of the community it is important that enough time always be set aside for open process and personal reports of internal experience within the context of circumstances of daily life.

The second academic year of teacher training, after the transformational retreat, would be organized completely around teaching internships. This next phase of the training might involve three days a week of teaching in a classroom with the other two days structured specifically to support and enhance the primary learning experience of being a teacher. One of these non-internship days would focus on small group process in a three hour meeting and the other day would be set aside for special workshops in teaching methods. These workshops would ideally be more experiential than academic, they would be practical so that the new teachers could practice applying what they learn the very next day or the next week and the only home work or outside study that would be required would be for specific classroom application. In this way the teacher training faculty during this phase would serve more as supervisors, consultants and guides offering practical advice and emotional support.
Fledgling teachers would be encouraged to keep a journal of their experiences each day with a particular emphasis on their inner life, the emotions and internal voices that they noticed while they are teaching and engaging students. A half hour to forty five minutes for this writing at the end of each school day would need to be structured into the internship so that student-teachers would not be expected to do this on their own time. In the small groups they would then share parts of these journals with each other and with the facilitator to explore how they might best direct their energy in order to develop their own optimal style of teaching. The practice of writing detailed process notes on everything that happened in the classroom both in the outer environment and within the internal experience of the teacher heightens self-awareness and invites inner wisdom through the process of reflection. Having experienced the five wisdom energies in the maitri space awareness practice student teachers would have more awareness of their subtle shifts in energy and internal experience and they would have new ways to structure this awareness so as to increase their sensitivity and discrimination. The small groups could then focus on specific interpersonal patterns in the teacher student relationship such as discipline problems, lack of enthusiasm in students, problems with exceptional and gifted students and even interpersonal problems with the main classroom teacher or other school wide systemic problems involving faculty, staff, parents and administrators.

During this time student teachers could also work on mandala drawings that would represent themselves as teachers immersed in the environment of a classroom of students. As I presented in chapter eight a mandala makes use of what Wilber (1980) calls ‘vision-logic’ and organizes intuitive information in a holistic visual format that can be grasped or ‘read’ all at once. These mandalas would serve a similar function to the boundary profiles which I described in chapter one as part of my training in family therapy. In doing family therapy it is essential that one become aware of how one’s formative development and specific rôle in one’s family of origin will influence how one tends to interact with families in clinical practice. A boundary profile then lists all of the specific kinds of relationship
patterns one might tend to develop with specific members of any given family. These boundary profiles ideally would be updated in reviews with a supervisor after each session in training or each difficult session in mature practice. In the same way teachers could create pictures or mandalas that depict their own personal styles, preferences, wisdom energies, strengths and weaknesses. Student-teachers could do one in-depth mandala depicting themselves as a teacher and then after each day of student-teaching they could sketch a new mandala to reveal specific points of irritation, frustration and confusion as well as areas of joy, wisdom and confidence. After journal writing, just a few moments would be enough to summarize feelings and subtle perceptions using colour, pictures, symbols and perhaps a few key words in the making of a daily mandala.

Parallel with the group process would be an interactive course in child development for the first two terms of introduction and preparation. This course would involve as much experiential work of observing children as well as imagination and dramatic simulation exercises of being a child as academic study in learning the theories. This course would be synchronized with the work happening in the group process where people would be touching on their own individual experience as a child both at home and at school. In addition to child development this course, being at least to some extent a book reading course, could also involve an introduction to family systems theories, subpersonality theories and notions of ego state therapy. These studies would concentrate on the early phases of child development in the first term and then move into notions of adult development, self-actualization and transpersonal development in the second term. Because I have studied Wilber’s system (Wilber, 1980) closely and presented a part of it here in chapters seven and eight my tendency would be to use his system as a baseline bringing in other theorists where applicable. A basic child development text with an edited selection of writings might also be useful.

Reading Gebser (1985) would also be appropriate for the students in this course would be encouraged to explore the possibility that each distinct phase of development still
has a place in their every day life as an important aspect of their consciousness and their mind/body as a learning system. Students could explore Gebser's five forms of consciousness (see the beginning of chapter seven) through contemplative, experiential, dramatic and artistic exercises. They could explore his 'Archaic' form through silent meditation and through communing with nature, his 'Magic' form through spontaneous play and through designing rituals, his 'Mythic' form through story telling, visual arts, dance and epic drama, his 'Mental' form through the normal business of study and intellectual pursuits and finally they could work on developing his 'Integral' form of consciousness by integrating their experiences of the maitri space awareness practice into their daily life and their teaching internships. It takes a lot of practice to re awaken all of the different styles of intelligence and to learn to apply them at the appropriate time. Developing Gebser's 'Integral' form of consciousness could be seen as the fruition of the entire contemplative component of the teacher training program.

Another course of study that would be part of such a curriculum would be largely theoretical and philosophical. This would be an introduction to the philosophy of holistic education and the psychology of consciousness. At present my choice for a book that would introduce people to principles of holistic philosophy would be Lemkow (1990) particularly because she strikes a good balance in presenting these ideas from the many perspectives of spirituality and religion, philosophy, science and sociology. This book also has wonderful little boxes with quotations from seminal thinkers which could direct a student or entire class into a side study of any number of interesting historical, philosophical, psychological, sociological or poetic and artistic themes. This course could take on a self-directed quality at a certain point encouraging students to follow their own areas of interest. Students could carry out individual or group research and then present their findings and teach the class what they learned which would include designing experiential exercises to evoke an understanding in the rest of the class. Some of the areas that students might explore could include the psychology of William James (1958, 1961,
1983) systems theory in the works of Bateson (1972, 1979), Jantsch (1980), Prigogine and Stengers (1984), Maturana and Varela (1987), the ecological philosophies of Goldsmith (1993), Berry (1990), and Orr (1992) and ecological psychology as in Roszak (1993), existentialism of Tillich (1952), Buber (1958), Kierkegaard (1944, 1954), Sartre (1956, 1966), Heidegger (1950, 1962), early twentieth-century visionaries like Smuts (1926), Teilhard de Chardin (1959, 1964) and Bergson (1949, 1960, 1975) could be explored as well as more contemporary ones such as Fox (1988) and Capra (1982). Articles from the *Holistic Education Review* such as those found in Miller (1991) could also serve as springboards into discussion and further study.

In the second term the concentration could shift to the study of Mysticism and comparative spirituality. A good starting place for this might be Johnston (1970) and Aldous Huxley (1944). Smith (1976) gives a good summary for understanding sacred worldview in the primordial tradition and the works of Campbell (1949) and Jung (1964) could also be explored as an introduction to mythology and archetypal psychology. An educational goal for this section would be to give the students a glimpse of what is humanly possible and introduce them to the study of those accomplished individuals who have reached beyond the narrow limits of the consensus consciousness of their time. Ideally, this would serve as an introduction to a life long process of learning from the various traditions of sacred wisdom found around the world throughout history. Johnson (1982) gives a history of meditation in various cultures relating how these ideas and practices are relevant today. After reading and working together with some of these books the class could break into specific interest groups in order to study one particular tradition in more depth. Depending on where their own personal interests drew them they could choose one sacred system of thought to penetrate its essence and then apply it to the notion of becoming a teacher. Some possibilities might include Taoist and Confucian texts (Chan, 1963; Watson, 1968; Wilhelm, 1968), Buddhist teachings (Jacobson, 1983; Pabongka, Tharchin & Roach, 1990; Sogyal, 1992; Suzuki, 1970; Tibet House Editors, 1986;
Trungpa, 1973, 1987, 1988), Indian; Vedantic, Yoga and Hindu teachings (Deutsche, 1969; Edgerton, 1944; Eliade, 1975; Feuerstein, 1989; Satperm, 1993), Jewish Khabala (Ashlag, 1969; Hoffman, 1981; Schaya, 1973), Mystical Christian works (Fox, 1980, 1987; Peers, 1928, 1947, 1957, 1978; Ware, 1980; Wolters, 1961), Islamic Sufism (Arberry, 1968; Baldick, 1989; Khan, 1977, Shah, 1971), Early Greek Philosophy (Barnes, 1979; Hamilton & Huntington, 1961; Friedlander, 1958), Neoplatonic thought and Gnosticism (Armstrong, 1966; Robinson, 1979; Miller, 1986), world-wide Shamanistic traditions (Eliade, 1964; Halifax, 1979; Harner, 1980; Heinze, 1991; Laderman, 1991), and Native American spirituality (Ywahoo, 1987; Black Elk & Lyon, 1990)) etc. The objective in studying these traditions would be to identify as much as possible with the originators of each system and to work at seeing the world in the way that they did. By penetrating to the core of any one of these traditions a student can be led to understand how acute awareness and reverence for the sacred patterns which connect all things can transform life into a highly conscious participation in a process greater than oneself allowing ordinary perception to become fresh and precise, opening the door to intuitive wisdom.

In the final terms after the maitri space awareness retreat or intensive this line of study could be brought into the teaching workshops and would shift to specific educational philosophies such as those of Steiner (1968, 197, 198, 1983; also see Harwood, 1958, and Spock, 1985), Montessori (1964, 1967a, b, 1973), and Krishnamurti (1953). Ideally, this course would focus on specific ways of structuring and relating to classes of students at different ages. At this point, practical books on learning styles and teaching such as Lawrence (1979), McCarthy (1980) and Williams (1983) could be joined with drama ideas for the classroom found in Way (1967). The educational goal of this term of study would be to introduce beginning teachers to a wide variety of specific teaching practices so that they could try them out in their internship and see which ones fit their own particular style and abilities. These teaching practices would be, for the most part, experiential and playful.
As we have seen in the developmental scheme of Wilber (1980) the process of maturation as an adult leading to self-actualization and beyond toward vision-logic and intuitive wisdom begins in a process of reclaiming unconscious abilities and forgotten modes of perception. Wilber's term 'Centaur' evokes the image of a being that has united the primitive instincts of an animal body with the sophisticated mind of a human being in a powerful synthesis. A teacher is ideally like the centaur, comfortable within the chaotic energy of children, intimately familiar with these powerful instincts, and yet wise in knowing how to allow these energies to flow on the natural path toward expansion, learning and growth. The maitri space awareness practice set in the proper context could help teachers with this process of reclaiming their unconscious psychological energy. The elemental energies as primitive emotions are very often excluded from our moment-to-moment awareness or if they are acknowledged they are most often domesticated just as we do with animals to serve our small minded vision and self-centred purposes. If we fully open to the power of these energies we see that they connect us to a world that is much larger than ourselves and actually direct us in an open ended holistic process to act in a way that brings benefit to ourselves and to our world. By relaxing into the intensity of emotional energy and liberating it from the reference point of self we open to the pre-existing flow of elemental energies which join mind and body together in a synchronization with the greater environment.

As we have seen, each elemental energy corresponds to a stage of early development which according to Buddhist psychology we tend to repeat unconsciously many times every second in order to construct our experience as separate individuals with dualistic consciousness. The primordial fear of annihilation and the consequent defensively aggressive stance arising in the earliest stage of duality is associated with the water element. Once a teacher has become comfortable with the bodily energy experienced around this basic fear of annihilation a cool and peaceful wisdom dawns with a pacifying style of sharp intelligence.
Likewise if teachers can learn how to relate to the primitive fear of hunger and relax the tendency to make value judgements based on primitive urges to either suck the world in, push it away, or ignore it, they can manifest the earthy wisdom of equanimity and a sense of self-existing richness. With a non-judgemental attitude and a recognition that all things have their place in the bigger picture, a previously hidden reservoir of resources opens up from within the teacher, her students and the world they share.

Learning how to work with the powerful energy of desire we explore the primitive magical process that tends to shape our perception in accordance with what we want. Experiencing the emptiness of desire and holding steady within the delicate sadness of an unrequited love affair with the world reveals the exquisite beauty of perception liberated from clinging. This is the fire energy of discriminating awareness wisdom wherein the energy of passion transforms into compassion. Teachers who show a mature love for their students and their world can illuminate unseen wonders in both.

The neurotic wind energy common in our society and our schools as a tendency to cling to concepts in a spinning cycle of competitive scheming and a fear of losing what we have struggled so hard to achieve can open out with relaxation and awareness to become the wind of effortless action, accomplishment free from goal orientation. Lastly, the sleepy trance of our normal dualistic consciousness which leads us to believe that our projections are an objective reality and that we respond to so called 'external' stimuli can open out into a fuller awareness of the inter-connections between mind and environment. Then the emotional energy of indifference transforms into a powerful sense of reverence for the world and one’s particular place in it.

Teachers who in one way or another manifest these wisdom energies in their relationships with students will connect with the natural wonder of being a child and show their students that they too can maintain this reverence as they learn and grow. Then education can truly become a process of drawing out the wisdom from within by recognizing that learning happens naturally because there is no fundamental separation
between body, mind and environment. Rather than an indoctrination in how to split yourself off from an objectified world, education becomes for teachers and students alike an opportunity to celebrate the wisdom energies which naturally circulate in a world that is elemental and good.
CHAPTER 23 NOTES

1 James Evans has recently completed a Ph.D. thesis that aimed to test whether or not the Maitri Space Awareness retreat has any positive effect on self-acceptance and self-awareness. He examined 50 graduate students enrolled in the M.A. degree program in contemplative Psychotherapy at the Naropa Institute using the Adjective Checklist and the Tennessee Self-concept Scale before and after the program and found that there was a significant increase in self-acceptance and self-awareness. Based on the results of a three-month follow-up test he says that further research is indicated to study the long term effects of the Maitri program.

2 See Chapter 1 for some examples of what I mean by temporarily disturbing effects. There I briefly describe my own experience of intensified emotions and glimpses of wisdom while doing the maitri space awareness practice. Also my chapters on the five elemental wisdoms in Part IV include general descriptions of constricted and misdirected elemental energies as emotional confusion as well as their ever-present wisdom potential.

3 It seems to me that in the early days of mixing psychotherapy with meditation and Buddha Dharma at Naropa there were many people who were well trained both personally and professionally in a variety of psychotherapeutic styles and disciplines. However when these people were introduced to meditation and Buddhist teachings they were so impressed with the power of these teachings that they tended to downplay their previous schools of learning. Having already been through some form of therapy themselves they were ready to make the most of meditation, however a certain number of their students were not so well prepared. In the years since I studied at Naropa I have learned, particularly through my own therapy and in working with others, that different therapeutic interventions are appropriate at different levels of development. Mindfulness Awareness in one form or another seems to me always helpful as it seems to act as a leavening agent in the process of psychological and spiritual development encouraging the natural process to unfold. However, when there are specific ‘fixations’ (to use the Freudian term) having to do with specific traumas or perceived traumas that upset the natural developmental process, then specific therapeutic techniques seem to be, to my mind, the medicine of choice. In my clinical work with adult victims of childhood trauma I integrate training in mindfulness awareness with teaching clients very simple ways to work with their overwhelming emotions, the goal being to empower them to heal themselves. Much of the current work in psychotherapy, Small (1982), Johnson (1986), Farmer (1989), Bradshaw (1990), Finney (1990), Maltz (1991), Weiss (1991), Moore (1992) seems to include some form or other of exercises in relaxation and body/mind awareness. Although some of the therapeutic techniques are most effective in the context of traditional psychotherapy I have seen many highly motivated and disciplined clients who have done most of their own work at home by diligently applying the exercises given in self help books which proves my point that much of what we expect from therapy could, I believe be achieved within an educational setting.

4 A genogram is a diagram of a family something like a family tree. See Pendagast and Sherman (1979) for an in-depth explanation of genograms: ‘It is a structural framework that enables the student to diagram in simple terms the general information (names, dates etc.) and the complex information (triangles, repetitive family issues and scripts) about a family in concrete and easily understood terms.’ (p. 101). For me, drawing up a genogram of my own family and sharing it with my classmates in a presentation was unforgettable and powerfully cathartic experience.

5 Mayhew (1990) writes of her experiences and documents those of participants who took part in a re-parenting group for adult children of alcoholics which she ran specifically for the purpose of helping people learn how to parent their own children. She cites Middleton (1985) who states, in Mayhew’s words ‘that grief resolution results in parents becoming more open with their children’ and that grief resolution is so important that until it occurs, skills learned in parenting classes cannot be used to good effect’ (Mayhew, p. 50). The program I advocate for teachers is based on exactly the same premise. Unless teachers resolve their own childhood issues, grieving the pain of their ‘inner child’ ego states, they cannot teach effectively and will benefit little from academic courses in pedagogy or learning styles. Once the grieving has occurred and issues of childhood trauma begin to resolve, an integration of childhood ego states gradually begins to occur. Then, in my way of thinking (following Wilber 1980; 1981a, and Wilber, Engler & Brown, 1986) a person is ready to walk the path of meditation and contemplative awareness toward recognizing emotional energy as wisdom.
The term 'inner self helper' has been used in the clinical practice of working with people who have multiple personality disorder (Comstock, 1991). The idea that we have within us the resources to heal ourselves from psychological confusion is in concordance with Buddhist philosophy and practice. Sogyal (1992) quoted in my chapter 'OCCIDENTAL ORIENTATIONS' refers to a 'wise guide' and a 'hidden spiritual being'. Jung (1968b) also subscribed to the notion that the unconscious mind is our natural source of wisdom, healing and balance. Milton Erickson (Erickson & Rossi, 1979, 1981) used hypnosis in his clinical practice to tap into a wise and healing aspect of his clients. Whitfield (1985) looks at recovery from addictions as a spiritual transformation and shows that the higher power used in twelve step self help programs can also be considered an inner power or a higher aspect of one's transpersonal awareness which is not separate from who one is as a struggling human being in the present.

While meditating and practicing to provoke emotional energies it is very helpful to learn about how energy moves in the body. Some people can experience physical pain in their back and joints while meditating or while doing the maitri space awareness practice. For these reasons some form of contemplative body awareness discipline is recommended. Aiki-do, founded by Ueshiba (Stevens, 1987) a Japanese warrior-sage of the 20th century, like Tai-chi teaches the practitioner to be aware of the flow of ki (Japanese) or chi (Chinese) throughout the body and to use the unbalanced aggressive energy of an attacker to defeat himself. Though it takes many years of diligent practice to master these subtle forms of energy awareness in the body I have found in my clinical practice that an introduction to the ways of grounding energy by taking a solid stance is immediately helpful to anyone suffering from an overload of emotional energy. This technique of grounding is presented as a therapeutic exercise in Dobson and Miller (1978). Although I would never suggest that anyone should attempt to learn yoga or Tai-Chi from a book, the best practical book of yoga that I have found is Mira and Mehta (1990).
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