

Spirit-Scribing:

TEXTUAL SENSITIVITIES OF WRITING AND READING SPIRITUALITY

by

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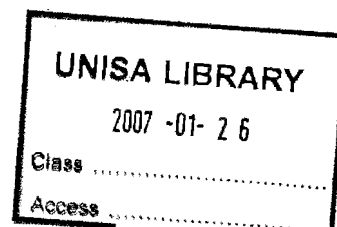
Promoter: Professor J. S. Krüger / Joint Promoter: Dr. Eugene H. Peterson

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"I declare that *Spirit-Scribing: Textual Sensitivities of Writing and Reading Spirituality* is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been acknowledged by means of complete references."



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ABSTRACT

Title: *Spirit-Scribing: Textual Sensitivities of Writing and Reading Spirituality*

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Summary:

There are certain texts and certain ways of writing which when we encounter, we feel we are touching the edge of mystery. What obtains in such texts is the revelation of spirit, the resonance of the holy. The creation of texts that capture and display this sense is an artistic capability. To read receptively in a manner that uncovers this sense of spirit is also an artistic capability. These two approaches to writing and reading form the background of this study. Together they describe what is identified in the study as textual spirituality. The foreground of the study is a consideration of the unique aspects of the textual approach to spirituality with a view to how it can be cultivated and recognized in the academy and so contribute to the clearer organizing of spirituality as a discipline. There are three parts to the study. Part One deals with the challenges of understanding and studying spirituality and spirituality texts in general. It then explores, specifically, the philosophical bases and rationale for writing spirituality texts as a mode of communicating the sense of spirit. Part Two of the study is demonstrative. It displays an example of the writing of an original spirituality text using the frameworks of the poetic, the narrative and the intuitive. Part Three, following, is largely concerned with those approaches to reading that facilitate the garnering of the sense of spirit from written texts. It then revisits the question of the disciplinary identity of textual spirituality and how it may have a cogent contribution in the academy. Overall, the study is an argument for the possibility of the artistic inscription and transcription of spirit through the agency of written texts.

Key terms:

Spirituality; Spirituality - Study of; Spirituality Literature - Writing and Reading; Literary Arts - Spiritual Aspects; Education - Spiritual Aspects.

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RUDIMENTS

The following is both preface and inchoative introduction to the study. It provides a brief context, background, and foreground to the text. It also furnishes some insight into the personal undertones at work in the study.

Of Words, Honey, and Spirit

We live juxtaposed between what appears to be a vast system of interlocking relationships we call the universe and what appears to be an intricate system of emptiness which we used to call matter. Increasingly, the question we used to pose to the universe, 'is there anything out *here?*', is being posed to matter. The answers have not been as predictable as we had expected. Mystery seems to be interwoven into everything we touch and which we experience. Our over-reliance on the solidity of the material is being overturned not only in science but also in philosophy and religion. Philosophical terms like postmodern and deconstruction are variations of quantum physics and mechanics, while terms like new age and spirituality are their religious counterparts. The usual reaction upon finding ourselves unclothed and unmasked is not to revel in the glory of nakedness, but rather to grab whatever cover is available, just like our primordial parents Adam and Eve are said to have done. Consequently, quantum physics is finding cover in mysticism; deconstruction, as much as it dislikes it, is finding that its answers lie in a form of structuralism; secularism (postmodernism) is finding much to the surprise of all concerned, that its answers lie not in religion *per sé*, but rather in

spirituality.

What makes all of this interesting is not the idea of cyclical harmonization it seems to point to, but rather the increasing awareness that harmonization does not have to entail a pendulum swing towards another opposition, that the cycling can be arrested, placed into a new orbit where new meanings and intrications of relationships reveal themselves. It is therefore the search for a meaningful alternative, a search for the silent wisdom of the 'third' between the clashing argument of 'this' over against 'that'. This silent other, after the clashing noises have abetted, offers the wisdom of the 'neither this nor that'. In the confounded silence that follows this resolution, the 'this' inevitably finds that it has all along been contained in the 'that', and vice versa with the 'that'. In a way of speaking, the Tao comes to a rest when the Yang recognizes that its being terminates in the Yin, and the Yin, that its being terminates in the Yang. The circle of the Tao would spin endlessly without this intrinsic resolution of self within the other, and the other within the self.

Names are attempts to make coherent sense of something, to locate it, give the proper coordinates so that meaningful conversation can be carried out. But names are not the reality even when they signify it. The search for wholeness is something being played out in many arenas, bearing different names. In some of them, like quantum physics, the debates have long gained prominence, in others like global economics, the demarcations are only being worked out. Not only are the debates occurring 'out there', they are also occurring 'in here'. The various quests to find equilibrium find their counterparts in individual expressions. Using 'us' in the most inclusive manner, we are finding that it is only 'us' here. We are the ones creating these arguments, wanting to find meaning through the cacophony of opposing voices and the jockeying for positions. It is what is happening in us that expresses out there. We are beginning to discover that we find peace around us when there is peace within us and that this 'us' is as wide as we

do not want it to be.

This study began long ago, long before I had even envisioned that I would one day follow the tortuous road that leads to studies like this. It began the moment I discovered that words and certain ways of using words were like the eating of honey, thereby setting me up for a confrontation down the road that would challenge all such notions of textual pleasure. Early on, it was easy enough to hide. I could lead a secret life of pleased reading while participating in that other facade of reading, the rending of books and words in order to regurgitate them so the critic could be satisfied that I knew what was true. Secretly however, I knew that true was not like that at all, true was something felt, recalled not through exactitude, but through feeling and sensation. It was the crystallization of the moment when I paused through the reading of a passage, or a sentence, or a combinations of words and sighed, noticing the sigh only after I had exhaled. At one time I took to marking such moments, pencil in hand, but that too had to be abandoned and seen to be fitted more to that other malaise of the rending of words in order to mimic them. By the time I came to graduate studies, the dueling gladiators, or knights of words, had finely honed their skills. I had become adept at camouflaging myself within the academy and making my way through it unscathed, but graduate school almost finished me. Were it not for a lucky friendship at the school with a wonderful wordsmith I had long ago discovered, I very likely would not have survived. When it came to choices for postgraduate school, it soon became apparent that other creative options had to be explored. A conventional postgraduate school with a cookie-cutter machinery for producing graduates would most likely, in my weakened state, make short work of me, force me into a permanent mode of the rending of words which I had thus far managed to avoid. I figured that I had a sufficiently well-developed sense of what I was after enough to be able to guide my own search. Perhaps with my final academic gasp, I could articulate something of my bliss, that secret taste of honeyed words I had

discovered so long ago. But how to do it? Somewhere between academic pedantry and textual pleasure, a ground had to be created where coherence could speak to the dueling gladiators, the knights of words, whose only fight seemed to be about how words should be wielded. This study, I hope, is that coherence, the voice of the third other who stands in the middle of my mystic/poet self and my academic/critic self. Perhaps these two could exist in the one arena of the academy without having to duel to the death. The mystic/poet would not have to feel an outsider and rely on the Bohemian flair in order to feel accepted. If only he could make clear to the academic crossing guards that knowing how to steal honey from bees is a worthwhile endeavour. The academic/critic would not have to hold on to the shields of rationality and objectivity as sole explanation for the nature of things. It takes more than these to account for reality.

In the end, this study is an aspect of that replacement of cyclical movements into another orbit whose goal is towards wholemaking. I have increasingly isolated the phrase 'textual spirituality' for what I am arguing for here. Spirituality of course, is not something you can touch, or hand over to another. It is evanescent. You can have a sense of what it entails, like the warmth of a breath upon the skin. You cannot contain the breath, all you are left with is the sensation. The reality reveals itself through the sensation, and its description with the expression, 'it feels like this'. Still, the skin of this study are words, or more precisely texts, whose breath carries warmth in them. I have argued that such texts are what qualify to be called 'spirituality texts'. Spirituality in this sense does not equate with 'spiritual' or 'moral', but rather with the sensuous presence of something, someone, breathing underneath the words. My gasp in this study is to say that this presence is worth getting to know, worth appreciating. The study is simply an attempt to make cogent argument as to how it can be done. I have used the rubric of spirituality because it seems most representative of what the process looks like. It is also a rubric that at its centre is most concerned with whole-

making, becoming whole. Within the academy, spirituality is that intruding non-discipline which does not seem to want to play by the rules. Where fragmentation seems to be the norm, spirituality is calling for an inclusive and expansive vision.

There are therefore two fronts to the argument of this study. They carry each other. One argument is for the proper locating and inclusion of spirituality studies within the academy largely because to not do so will surely starve the academy of life, not the other way round. The other argument is for the recognition of the uniqueness of written texts that manage, for whatever combination of reasons, to become transmitters of the felt presence of what I would call spirit. In some sense, all texts have presence. Even 'blah' can be some form of presence. But, what happens with what I have identified as 'spirituality texts' is something special. The trajectories of the lines seem to intersect in such a manner that depth, mystery, holiness are brought into meaningful focus. In my view, it is not simply a matter of aesthetics, the beauty of form, but rather intimations of encounter with a living, breathing presence who is another. When words or a text manage to arrest a moment in this flow of outbreath that reality seems to be composed of, what we peer at, ever so fleetingly, is a suggestion of the silent meaningful ground at the bottom of it all. Here, words cease and silence speaks. This is the hidden ground that inspires poets, mystics, and artists alike. A 'spirituality text' in that sense can be a painting, a philosophical abstract, a poem, a sculpture, a melody. This study has however considered only one use of 'spirituality text' as referring specifically to written texts. This provides focus to the study and also facilitates a basis upon which arguments for a disciplinary approach to the study of spirituality can be organized. It is hard to imagine academic study without texts. Perhaps if we can clarify texts and how spirituality views them, much can become clear about what spirituality is and what it is striving for. I think that the uniqueness of spirituality texts can serve just this purpose and thereby enrich what is already a rich resource.

Studies like this cannot be written without the untiring support of others. Though mine has largely been a solitary walk, I owe a debt of gratitude to many people, many of them unknown by name. Somewhere during the writing of this text I found myself in that place where only hearts speak and where the intellect of mind is a dark blob. I remember the clearing of mind at the mention of an author's name, my own naming of certain authors as angelus, messengers of the divine. I remember the concern of friends and loved ones as I failed, for what seems to me now, to have been time and again, to grasp the very simplest lesson, acceptance, or to use a phrase coined by St. Paul, a godliness clothed in contentment, compassion. I have come to value the Buddhist understanding of compassion, *karuna*. It is not a compassion extended to another out of myself, but rather a compassion underneath the feet of everyone you meet and come across. The one ground. That kind of compassion. It was extended to me, and I thank all those who were there to see it being extended. I know that it is extended to them and I pray that I will learn acceptance of this ground of compassion which accepts all. All I have been asked to do is to accept the compassionate ground of my own being and to allow another the compassionate ground of their own being. That ground is one.

Many thanks to Sam Owusu who braved reading Part II of this study, and especially Act III when it was at its most messiest and bluish with the afterbirth of a hazardous labour. In this regard I also have to thank Professor Krüger and Doctor Peterson who had to play midwife to the giving birth of that piece of writing. After much cleaning, it still bears its own birthmark, and it sticks out in this study like a sore reminder of the work of mystics of so long ago who found their visionary works in cinders and sometimes their bodies joining the flare. Among them, someone I keep remembering, Marguerite Porete, died June 1310, burned at the stake. Her *Mirror of Simple Souls* survived beyond the flames and stands as testimony to many others to speak of that most invincible of subjects, the soul and its relationship to God. My own speech is tinged with Christian terminology,

which I sometimes feel is a burden, but it is mine, my identity is woven through it, and I have explored it deeply enough to know that there is something there so that there would be falsehood in its denial. But I do not want it to confine me, I seek a language that would enable me to stand any ground, the ground which is one, and still have clarity about that most invincible of subjects, the soul and God.

What's beyond this? I envisage myself crafting words like an artist, creating works of art, building a body of work, striving for the expression of spirit in words that allows another to hear the sound of their own breath. I pray God that I will be courageous enough to do it. I feel that I have said my peace, that this is what matters, at least to me. Perhaps there will be forays into this domain again, but it will likely not be for arguments any more, but for the purpose of witnessing, to be an angelus.

Lastly but not least (*the ground is one*), thanks and praises are due to my family and my families wherever they are. I thank them for their unyielding belief in my life and what of hope it represents. I thank my mate in life, Kitty, who made this work possible by providing the space for its gestation and germination. I thank my sons Joel and Jerome who represent the marriage of two words, truth and love. There are others to thank, Jan Peterson for an embrace of kindness, Karen and Bruce McAndless-Davis for warmth, Chris Yue for insight and conversation, Merv and Mae Coles for knowing what it takes and giving it. My father, Jobe, for quiet strength that alerted me early on, that one's personal river can run as deep as one would have it. My mother, Nelia, who is poor, but I pray God, not for too much longer. Myself, who is Self, for courage, honesty, integrity and acceptance. May your dreams of beauty and love come true.

Part One

Writing Spirituality: Contexts and Foundations

DIS/POSITIONS: Between Texts and Spirit

This chapter delineates the contexts in which the study's arguments are framed and outlines a scheme for reading the rest of the text. The areas covered include the background to the study, the aims and goals of the study, and brief explanations of the way key terms are being used. Also included are a brief analysis of the approach and outline of the study, the disciplinary context of the study, the form and extent of parallel studies and the contribution of the study.

Nexus

Ever since my mid-teens, I have had an unarticulated understanding that something deeply affective is sometimes captured in the written word that goes far beyond the surface appearance or stated goals of a text. Unfortunately, as usually happens with deeply felt experiences, I did not have the capacity for articulating that which I had such a clear sense about. The only way I knew of maintaining the sense of it was to seek out books that seemed to capture the essence of what I was after. And what I was after seemed to be the display of a sense of freedom, insight, depth of perception, something that I now recognize as the textual presence of spirit. This textual search for spiritual presence was happening long before I had been exposed to the formal study of spirituality. What was not yet present was the naming of what I was doing and what I had been attempting to realize. When I began formal religious studies and was exposed to the rudiments of the word *spirituality*, at first, I was exhilarated. It was like an immediate recognition, a

putting into place, a discovery of the fittedness of things. But while that was happening, something else was taking place. I could feel myself becoming more and more removed from the sense of awareness I had brought with me to my studies and which I had been seeking to deepen. Academic methodologies and ideologies seemed opposed to the modes of expression that I had long familiarized myself with as containing within them the sense of the spiritual. I was in a quandary. On the one hand, I understood and appreciated the goals of the academic endeavour, and yet, on the other, there seemed to be a clear need to preserve what seemed central to my understanding of the spiritual. The latter seemed more essential and in need of nurturing and so began a journey towards resolving the tension between the academy and the spiritual quest. What I came to realize was that the two frameworks need not be seen as opposed, but rather as not agreeing on some points. There seemed to be sufficient mutuality between the modes of understanding even though from the academic view, there was a high degree of suspicion about what spirituality was about and whether it at all should qualify as an academic discipline.¹ My own tentatively arrived at answer, was both *yes* and *no*. Yes, spirituality can and should be given attention as a valid “academic” discipline. However, the word academic is in parenthesis to indicate that this could only happen through a radicalization of what ‘academic’ entailed for the study of spirituality. Ideally, as the word ‘radical’ suggests, it would have to be something outworked to get to the root of what spirituality was after in the first place. With that initial stance, there would be a valid and continual basis for an ‘academic’

1. This question has been addressed at some length by Sandra M. Schneiders. See her two articles, “Spirituality in the Academy”, *Theological Studies* 50 (1989), 676-697 [also published in *Modern Christian Spirituality*, ed. B. Hanson (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 15-37]; “The Study of Christian Spirituality: Contours and Dynamics of a Discipline”, *Studies in Spirituality* 8 (1998), 38-57. Schneiders argues quite perceptively, with strict qualifications, for the validity of spirituality as an academic and overallly inclusive field of study. For other articles in this vein, see, Edward Kinerk, “Toward a Method for the Study of Spirituality”, *Review for Religious* 40.1 (1981), 3-19; Carlos M. Eire, “Major Problems in the Definition of Spirituality as an Academic Discipline” in *Modern Christian Spirituality*, ed. B. Hanson (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 53-61.

study of spirituality.

The prevalent contemporary approach to spirituality studies is to try and incorporate it into human science studies on the one hand, or into theology on the other. The former approach is the one favoured by those who do not see the value or necessity of a religious dimension to spirituality (secularist view). Such an approach has been forcefully argued for by Daniel Helminiak.² As far as Helminiak anticipates, the basis, aim and process of spirituality is something framed by the human psyche, which in turn, should result in the thesis that spirituality is a specialization within psychology and should therefore seek its ideological and methodological framework from that perspective.³

The argument for framing the methodological and ideological understanding of spirituality from the theological perspective has a much older historical basis than the human sciences approach.⁴ A prominent name that keeps surfacing along with the theological argument is that of the theologian Bernard Lonergan. Generally this amounts to a reinterpretation of Lonergan's influential work *Method*

2. Daniel A. Helminiak, *The Human Core of Spirituality: Mind as Psyche and Spirit* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996); *The Human Sciences: An Approach Via Spirituality* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998). For a more tempered view of this perspective see: Donald Evans, *Spirituality and Human Nature* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993); David O. Moberg, "Spirituality and Science: The Progress, Problems, and Promise of Scientific Research on Spiritual Well-Being", *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation* 38.3 (1983), 186-194. There are an increasing number of dissertations that have explored spirituality from this perspective. Another highly notable attempt at submitting the understanding and process of spirituality to the human sciences frame, albeit from a confessionally grounded perspective, has been carried out by Adrian Van Kaam, see his multi-volume work, *Formative Spirituality*.

3. See, Helminiak, *Human Core of Spirituality*; 121, 127-128, 271ff.

4. For a historical perspective of the inter-relationship between spirituality and theology see; Otger Steggink, "Study in Spirituality in Retrospect: Shifts in Methodological Approach", *Studies in Spirituality* 1 (1991), 5-23; Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality and History: Questions of Interpretation and Method* (New York: Crossroad, 1992). See also Sandra Schneiders' article in which she argues for a growing need to separate spirituality, per sé, off from the theological dimension, "Theology and Spirituality: Strangers, Rivals, or Partners?", *Horizons* 13.2 (1986), 253-274. Overall, this is a well-explored subject area with extensive source texts.

in Theology, to fit, with qualifications, the demands of a spirituality perspective.⁵ Understandably, the question of the relationship of spirituality to theology is one that is being asked in light of the increasingly expansive search for spirituality from very varied cultural and religious perspectives, especially given that historically, spirituality has been a theological, though largely ignored, domain.

What is of concern for me, without rehashing the arguments for the preceding perspectives, is how the apparent inclusion of spirituality into pre-identified frameworks essentially involves an attempt to fit spirituality into manageable and controllable contexts. For the human sciences approach (for example, Helminiak's), it involves reducing spirituality to the human frame, that is, removing reference to a divine frame. Theology, on the other hand, represents the constriction of spirituality to a dogmatically informed frame that leaves the vast dimensions of human diversities and perspectives untouched or radically subsumed. In my judgement, the answer does not lie in trying to manage and control the unamenable elements contained within spirituality, namely, divinity *and* diversity, but rather in submitting to the inner demands those perspectives represent. It is by acknowledging these demands that a true spirituality 'science', to use that term, can be forged. Spirituality can then enter the continuing human dialogue on its own unique basis and not on the basis of being subsumed into an already well-established discipline or one that is becoming more acceptable.

The problem with all transformative movements is finding legitimacy and a basis for speaking to the human situation. Spirituality continues to be at such a phase. The problem I see is that although more and more texts are being written and published under the umbrella term 'spirituality', a lot of this activity appears

5. See, Juan-Lorenzo Hinojosa, *Method in the Study of Spirituality*, Ph.D. dissertation (Berkeley, Ca.: Graduate Theological Union, 1984); Tad Dunne, *Loneragan and Spirituality: Towards a Spiritual Integration* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1985).

to be the attachment to texts of a term that currently happens to be in vogue.⁶ A further reason for making this judgement, is how very few texts take task with what the inner demands of spirituality may require and represent. Within the academic context, as pointed out above, the prevalent approach has been to take previous formats of academic and intellectual argumentation as basis for the establishment of the spirituality discipline. Unfortunately, and of necessity, this approach entails taking a stance outside of the subject matter (objectivity). There is no need to dispute here the validity of that approach because it has had a very long and successful application in various fields of human intellection. The problem I sense, is that this approach seems to go counter to the inner demands of spirituality. The idea of the cultivation of distance demanded by the academic ideal of objectivity, both undermines and distorts the nature and capability of the realization of what spirituality is about. The result is that exposure to academic arguments framed from an objectivistic perspective are unlikely to convince one about the validity of spirituality claims because the abstraction contained in the argumentation is an empty husk. With that approach, spirituality is being approached at a phase that is always one step removed from the reality. My assessment of this 'academic blind spot' may seem severe, but spirituality seems to me, perhaps more than other disciplines, to demand the forging of a wholly new approach to gaining human assent, something that is inherently interior to the subject and the process of its exploration. The cultivation of this new approach may incorporate intellectual argumentation, but not as the initial stance. What should be of importance is for the approach to have been arrived at through a process of submitting to the inner demands of spirituality and so creating a more authentic basis for fueling and engaging in its dialogue.

A further problem with the spirituality and academy confluence is that the

6. A good place to get a sense of this phenomenon is to do a search for spirituality texts on any of a number of online booksellers, for example, 'Amazon.com' or 'Borders.com'.

latter constitutes part and parcel of the infrastructure out of which the new movement of spirituality has risen in an effort to overcome the shortcomings of that and similar infrastructures. It would therefore seem shortsighted to quickly merge spirituality into the academy without first questioning or reevaluating the underlying ideologies that might have caused the initial fracture. Given the context in which this study is being written, this assessment may be the proverbial 'biting the hand that feeds you'. Nonetheless, it seems clear to me that the way of approach for spirituality should be derived *primarily* from its own basis rather than from some pre-existing criteria. The suggestion from this would be the need to forge an approach to spirituality and its study that affirms what it presents itself as being. By and large, this will mean an *interior* rather than an *exterior* approach to building the initial and ongoing bases for a spirituality discipline.

Trajectories

What and where should we be looking as far as the study of spirituality is concerned? This study is looking at the possibility of making spirituality realizable through textual presentations. This seems to me the most accessible way in which spirituality may be examined, but it is by far, not the only one. Some other possibilities of approach, mentioned here only because they will not be addressed centrally in this study, are the visual and performing arts. Others are music, the arena of human inter-relationships, the practice of faith, the testing of human limits through sports and other forms of the pursuit of excellence. All of these are promising avenues.⁷ The desirability of the textual approach is that it relates much more directly to the academic discipline and is therefore key if one of the aims of

7. For examples of texts, among others, that have examined some of these approaches to spirituality see the following: Andrew Cooper, *Playing in the Zone: Exploring the Spiritual Dimensions of Sports* (Boston: Shambhala, 1998); Dimitri Ehrlich, *Inside the Music: Conversations with Contemporary Musicians about Spirituality, Creativity and Consciousness* (Boston: Shambhala, 1997); Mary Elizabeth O'Brien, *Spirituality in Nursing: Standing on Holy Ground* (Sudbury, Mass.: Jones and Bartlett, 1999).

this study is to forge a pattern for future approach in the study of spirituality.

As a general rule, it is not a good thing to restrict the dimensions of a growing phenomenon, but if what is taking place in this study constitutes a pruning in order to allow for more fruitful growth, then the approach may be worthwhile. What seems clear at present, is that not everything that is being passed off as spirituality is being derived from its inner and central idea. A key issue that this study might provide impetus for, is the need for establishing bases for demarcating between what makes up and inherently identifies a spirituality text as contrasted to a text *about* spirituality. There may be value in remaining free and loose about the demarcations, but I think there is a definite need for, at the least, a broad demarcation of what texts may be given the internal identification *spirituality*. The key is whether a text presents itself as working *interiorly* rather than *exteriorly* or *anteriorly* to the subject matter. This distinction is of great importance. My estimation is that it is the failure to make this basic distinction that has resulted in spirituality studies being misunderstood and sidelined within the academic world.

Generally, without the proper context and adequate identification of what is taking place and what the aim is, spirituality writing is bound to appear quite onerous from an academic standpoint. The awareness of this propensity has I think, contributed to a fair amount of what I may term 'hybrid writing' within academic spirituality studies. From that context, 'hybrid' refers to the admixture of the academic approach to writing and the approach entailed by a cultivation of the spiritual sense. The tension is quite acute because generally speaking, spirituality students come to their studies mostly because they are seeking to deepen what they have already apprehended and which they consider to be of great value. Hybrid writing seems to most, to be the best way to resolve this tension, but unfortunately, it winds up dissatisfying both the demands of spirituality and the academy. What this study is identifying, are the demands of an interior approach

to the writing and reading of spirituality, hopefully resulting in a clarification of the distinctiveness and uniqueness of those processes.

The danger of the proposition of this study is that the conscious cultivation of the interior approach to writing spirituality is bound to appear quite unattainable. What may be hoped for in order to pull it off is a fair amount of indirectness, which in my estimation requires at some level, a self-contained or self-sustained approach to writing. That is, given that there is enough validity to my argument for the textual approach to the study of spirituality, one of the key aims of this study is to present, within the context of this study, what may be identified as a spirituality text. The overall goal of this writing exercise is to try and convince one about the validity of the textual expression of spirituality on the basis of an affective process rather than through intellectual argumentation alone. This does not mean that the approach and content of the exercise will convince each reader to the same extent. Each of us brings certain elements to the reading process, and more centrally for reading spirituality, different levels of spiritual awareness, so that the affective process will be different for each and every person. Nonetheless, the overall assent is that the manner in which certain texts present themselves to us entices the idea that they contain within them elements of the spiritual, something that goes beyond the reading capacities which we bring to them. That is, this textual sense of the spiritual does not seem to just be a function of the reading process, but rather of the inherent capability of a text to provide access and entrance to a realm of spirit.

Framework

The overall methodological approach to the study is phased into three parts. These are logical and necessary demarcations. Part I of necessity, deals with some preliminary issues addresses in this chapter. The intent here is to provide some

brief and incisive demarcations about the overall study. What the chapter intends to achieve has already been set out in the introductory abstract. Chapter two, included in Part I, takes up the whole question of what constitutes spirituality writing and what dimensions need to be satisfied in order for a text to *begin* to work towards an internal identification as a work of spirituality. The statement is conditional because much more than the external satisfaction of certain standards is the goal. By way of reiteration, the goal is to somehow produce a text that, in a few words, makes the realm of spirit accessible through words. It is easier said than done, but there is enough viability and evidence to the argument that this can be done. My continual encounter with varied texts of this genre seems to indicate that it happens much more as an indirect consequence rather than through the cultivation of deliberate intent. Obviously this raises a question as to whether something that happens so inconsequentially can at all be demonstrated. My overall answer, judging from this undertaking, is yes. The affirmation however needs to be qualified and this will be part of the goal for chapter two. The hope is that by the end of chapter two, the reader will be ready to assess the demonstrative approach to spirituality writing set out in Part II of the study. The key assessment is whether the exercise in Part II succeeds in producing something that has within it the characteristics and qualities of a spirituality text.

To continue, Part II consists of what logically, for the purposes of the study, may be identified as a single chapter (chapter three). In overall outline, it is a self-contained, self-sustained text. That is, it is a text that is complete in and of itself apart from reference to Parts I and III of the study. Although Part II (or, chapter three) gives overall completion to the other chapters in the study, it is primarily an attempt to demonstrate and put into practice the theoretical arguments about the validity of making spirituality accessible through a textual presentation. The approach, as already stated, is based on the affectiveness of various elements that go into an effort to write spirituality. Whether Part II succeeds or not in

demonstrating the approach will be for the reader to judge. Notwithstanding, such assessment of the exercise will not negate the overall thesis of this study that the sense, or essence, of spirituality, can be captured and made present through a textual and literary presentation. As far as the specific spirituality subject matter of Part II is concerned, briefly stated, it may be understood as a creative exploration of the transformative intercourse of the human search for meaning, that is, religion in its naked form (spirituality), interacting with various senses of the intimating absence/presence of reality (mystery/the ineffable).

After chapter three (Part II), attention briefly shifts to a review of the previous chapter as giving evidence of spirituality. After the overall assessment, chapter four then brings into discussion other authors who in my estimation give clear evidence through their writing of the affective and textual presence of spirituality. Obviously these represent the author's choice, but the intent is to highlight certain patterns of approach and presentation in works that are identifiable as works of spirituality, or perhaps more to the point, authors who in my judgement, cultivate this form of writing. It is important to note that these authors are not just what may be called good writers. Much more than good writing takes place in the texts/authors highlighted. In my estimation, something is touched by these writers that affirms what I identify as the realm of spirit. Overall, chapter four is about the reading aspects of spirituality texts. It explores various levels at which the reading of spirituality functions and the manner in which these provide ways of engaging with the invisible realm of spirit that the spirituality text is seeking to provide access to.

Chapter five following, is the concluding chapter and serves both that purpose and the purpose of examining and detailing what the overall impact of the study entails if at all it has validity and relevance. By way of recontextualization, it assesses the overall accessibility of the spiritual through the study of spirituality texts and the continuing need to demarcate frames of reference for such study. It

also asks and seeks to answer the following questions concerning the argument of study: Where do we go from here? What does this entail for the academic study of spirituality and for the proper and appropriate examination of spirituality texts? What are the dynamics of the relationship between spirituality texts and texts *about* spirituality. What pre-understandings should a student bring to the examination and study of spirituality and spirituality texts? What, if at all, are the ramifications of the study for the textual examination of spirituality and for spirituality in general? The chapter then concludes by touching on other diverse avenues of the social human fabric that facilitate the realization of and access to the spiritual sense.

A point of note in terms of the length of individual chapters. As already pointed out, chapter three (Part II), is a self-contained work and is therefore much longer than would be allocated for a conventional chapter. I have refrained from giving separate chapters in it as this might distract from the overall orientation and location of the work within a single study. The sections in it are clearly marked and these may serve as coherent and internal chapters. The rest of the chapters, chapters one, two, four and five, are of conventional length, giving the overall study the sense of depth that may be expected from this kind of study.

Terminology

The danger with proffering a way of interpreting the way key terms are being used is that it may serve as a process of limiting, thereby cutting off the study at its inception, from the very process of exploration it is founded on. However, for purposes of at least the base form of mutual understanding, some broad themes may be beneficially expressed. Without hesitation, the key term for this whole study is *spirit*. This might appear a misrepresentation of priority, since one could argue that the key term is *spirituality* rather than *spirit*. However, the

determining factor here is the priority of the latter, rather than the prevalence of the former. Indeed, without a prior understanding of *spirit*, I fail to see how we may speak of spirituality at all. It is therefore the realm of spirit that needs to be established as the initial and overall informing frame to one's understanding and interpretation of spirituality.⁸

For purposes of initiating this study and as representation of my own understanding, the word *spirit* represents the contextual realm out of which all sense of reality and existence arises. In this sense, it has something of the resonance that is evident in the understanding of *spirit* in some of the classical religions, for example, the *Tao* in Taoism, the *Holy Spirit* in Christianity, *Brahman* in Hinduism, *Ru'ah* in Judaism. Spirit also resonates with the more contemporary presentation of Rudolf Otto's idea of *the Holy*⁹, and also with the non-dialectical understanding of *the Sacred*¹⁰. What is in view in all these terms is the central and unifying principle of all seen and unseen reality. My point here is not to argue for an interchangeability of the terms but rather for a recognition of a realm of convergence out of which each of the terms seems to be seeking reference and pointing to. In a more mundane manner, we may speak of this as the *divine realm*. To say that is not to say God or Allah, or Yahweh, or Brahman. It is rather to point to the congruous co-arising of reality, for that is exactly what the word *divine*

8. Most attempts at defining spirituality begin from the word *spirituality*, the result as can be expected, are quite a varied array of definitions. In contrast, even though he focuses on spirituality as *experience*, Carlos Eire gives cogent arguments for beginning the exploration of spirituality first from its metaphysical basis of spirit, and then moving on to what that understanding would entail for spirituality. See his article, "Major Problems in the Definition of Spirituality as an Academic Discipline", in *Modern Christian Spirituality: Methodological and Historical Essays*, ed. B. Hanson (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 57-60.

9. Rudolph Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational*, trans. J. W. Harvey (New York: Oxford University Press, [1923] 1958).

10. This is a way of contrasting this understanding of *the Sacred* from a dialectical sense of the Sacred when contrasted with the idea of the Profane, something popularized by Mircea Eliade's book, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, tr. J. Swain (London: Harcourt Brace, 1959). Here *the Sacred* is being presented in a holistic sense, with the whole of reality being seen as sacrally based.

represents, a source of origination.

A further illuminating understanding of *spirit* emanates from the diverse religious representations of spirit as *breath* or *wind*. This representation is found in Judaism and Christianity, in the traditional religions of sub-Saharan Africa, in Hinduism, and also in the East Asian interpretation of breath as life force, *ch'i*. What this interpretation provides is a powerful visual image that is not only accessible and affective, but also invisible. That there was this settling on the idea of breath means that the image has for long been found capable of capturing the nuances that varied cultural contexts were trying to get across or saw as present in what they understood to be spirit. Perhaps this image may also point to the universal and emotive impact of death in human society. Since a person who is dead no longer has breath and thus life, breath was then equated to spirit, or the life-making and life-giving aspect of reality. In this sense, to say *spirit* is to recall something of this aspect of the enlivening dimension of reality. Again, my aim is not to make a simple equation of these ideas across cultural and historical contexts but to simply point to their congruous coincidence.¹¹

With the preceding general presentation, one may then go forward to give an understanding of spirituality. My argument so far has been that the interpretation of spirituality arises out of the interpretation of *spirit*. With this in mind and given the preceding, *spirituality* may be understood as the desire, hope, quest, act, art, or process . . . of making the realm of *spirit* (*the Holy, Tao, Holy Spirit, the Sacred . . .*) realizable. There is an important backdrop to this process of spirituality. The normal and larger state of reality assumed or experienced in the process of spirituality is one of an enticing absence rather than a presence. That is, this sense of absence is not an absolute absence, an abyss, but rather an absence that points to the possibility of presence. The realizing or presencing of this intimating, enticing absence is what spirituality is after. In this sense, spirituality

11. For further exploration of this idea see the section "Inter/disciplines" below.

has much to do with mysticism, more specifically *apophatic* mysticism or mysticism of the *via negativa*. In some respects, we may speak of mysticism as being the philosophical fruition of spirituality. That is, when spirituality is concerned with the ultimate grounds of reality, it evolves into a concern with mysticism. To the same degree, when mysticism is concerned with the practical expression of what it apprehends of the ultimate, it devolves into spirituality.

I have deliberately made the interpretation as inclusive as possible for I believe that such inclusiveness is inherent in the process of spirituality itself. Nonetheless, there is still a sense of boundary so that one can still have some sense of what spirituality is after and what it is not after. This means that spirituality is not each and everything that somehow touches the human psyche and emotions. What should not be lost sight of is the original frame of reference to spirit as the determinative fulcrum. Without this continual sense of reference, of reaching out to this spirit realm of reality, spirituality of necessity, degenerates into something small, grabbing and exclusive, and in that process, becomes something quite other. This much seems enough to give an indication of how I am using and will be using the key terms *spirit* and *spirituality*.

Inter/disciplines

The development of spirituality as a discipline presents a problem of demarcation because the word 'discipline' implies distinct clarity about the boundaries and internal coherence of a subject. It also implies a level of consensus of methodological approaches, assumed hypotheses, evaluative parameters, modes of result identification and so forth. Given the very wide explorative base of spirituality, setting those kinds of parameters is bound to be a very frustrating endeavour for anyone seeking to establish spirituality as an academic discipline. The problem is that spirituality is, as it has been described, "a field-encompassing

field”¹². This, I think, should point to a clue. That is, rather than trying to establish spirituality on similar parameters as other fields of human study, for example psychology, sociology or anthropology; the self-defining clue for spirituality should come from exactly that transfusive or ‘field encompassing’ aspect of spirituality. In other words, the question that should be asked is, what is the one element (or elements) that is present whenever spirituality traverses different fields of study? Or further, what is the common element that persons from diverse fields such as science, theology, literature, philosophy, psychology, art, sociology and so forth, are identifying as the spiritual component of their discipline? My own assessment is that the incredible resonance of spirituality writing that is coming from such diverse sources is pointing to a common region of congruency. This common region of congruency essentially emanates from a recognition of the need for acknowledging the sense of mystery in human life and existence.¹³ This is the region that should determine what the discipline of spirituality amounts to. In that sense, the discipline of spirituality should retain that which is most important to its own process, namely, openness and the ability and capacity to traverse varied human contexts and fields of study in the articulation of mystery.

Rather than trying to define spirituality as a closed system, something entailed by the conventional approach of identifying a discipline, spirituality if at all it is to remain that, demands openness, and the capacity to be variously contextualized. In this sense, we may identify spirituality as being quintessentially transfusive, or in academic parlance, ‘interdisciplinary’. That is, spirituality has the capacity to transcend contextual boundaries while remaining meaningful beyond those boundaries. Spirituality in that sense is tapping into a unifying key to human existence, one that remains always beyond the certitudes of the present context.

12. Sandra M. Schneiders, “Spirituality in the Academy”, p.692, citing Van A. Harvey, *The Historian and the Believer* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), 54-59.

13. See the next paragraph for further exploration of this summation.

Spirituality is about the hunger for questions, the ability to refuse to settle on any answer as final, the necessity to always return to the question in a simpler manner, to ask the simplest thing. I think this is what the varied approaches to spirituality are doing, they are basically calling for a need to implant the element of mystery as a necessary component of any field of human exploration, whether science, religion, philosophy, medicine, sociology, education, ecology, psychology and so forth. Spirituality seems therefore to be organizing around the need to acknowledge mystery as an *inherent* component of human life and existence.

As a general trend, surface meanings of spirituality distinguish it from religion. This is quite understandable if religion is being identified as an institutionalization of the human search for meaning. In that sense, spirituality would be the attempt to wrest that human search for meaning from the tyranny of establishment. It is, in that sense, a process of purification, an attempt to get back to the seminal issue. If this is what is being recognized as taking place, this means that despite the initial differentiation, spirituality really and ultimately *is* about the religion, albeit an attempt to clarify the latter. If at first the various forms that spirituality is taking appear irreligious, this may have something to do with the need for spirituality to cut the apron strings of dependence upon what is being seen as a stultifying meta-structure. Like all transformative movements, this is at best a phase, a necessary movement of rejection of structure, though in some cases, it may involve a complete de-structuration. The problem is that structures always return. The hope expressed by the present movement of spirituality is that whatever structures return or remain, these will in the end become open structures, allowing for the transfusive element of our common human experience (mystery) to remain, and to be echoed out of various other constructs necessitated by the human attempt to temper the furious forces of reality.

All of this is to point out that the establishment of disciplinary parameters for the practice and study of spirituality necessitates both openness and open-

endedness. This study is an exploration of how this sense of openness may be cultivated in the writing and reading of spirituality texts. As far as congruous disciplines are concerned, poetry is the arena where textual openness and attention to the region of mystery has been most closely cultivated. The writing and reading of spirituality thus have a close resemblance to the cultivation of the poetic sense. However, spirituality and poetry are not the same discipline, that is, if poetry is interpreted in its technical sense of adherence to form and rules of presentation. Spirituality is primarily after the affective dimension of textual presence and will therefore take whatever form that allows that expression to occur. In this sense, there may be congruency between poetry and spirituality as such, but it will be more a congruency of effect rather than a congruency of form. The effect would be a congruency of the realization of spirit, of making the dimension of mystery present and accessible.

Inter/texts

Education is one of the most influential formative forces for orienting and re-orienting human understanding. If at all spirituality is to have continuing influence, it somehow has to be incorporated into the spectrum of the ways in which we explore mutual understanding and knowledge. In my estimation, the educational process is and will increasingly become the battle ground for the efficacy of this aspect of the spiritual re-evolution. The thesis of a re-evolution of education through the mode of spirituality is one that is being argued for by various authors.¹⁴ This study, in some ways, is a contribution to this growing

14. Key texts for this general thesis are the studies by George Steiner, *Real Presences* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989); Parker J. Palmer, *To Know as We are Known: A Spirituality of Education* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983); John P. Miller, *The Holistic Curriculum*, 2d ed. (Toronto: OISE Press, 1996); James Moffett, *The Universal Schoolhouse: Spiritual Awakening Through Education* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994). Also of note are the doctoral dissertations by; Daniel G. Scott, (continued...)

dialogue. By taking a singularly focused approach, namely the writing and reading of spirituality texts, what this study is doing is responding to the general thesis that spirituality consists of an essential and holistic mode of knowing that radically challenges the prevalent rationally and objectively grounded modes of knowing.

George Steiner's *Real Presences*, represents perhaps one of the most radical attempts to work subversively within the contemporary strictures of academia while at the same time pointing to possible ways out. His text is essentially a lament for the death of reference to the primary due to what he sees as the triumph of the secondary. In other words, according to Steiner, late and contemporary scholastics have secularized and domesticated primary encounter so that all knowledge has become second hand, *ad infinitum*. Instead, Steiner argues for the restoration of the 'real presence' of the 'archaic' aesthetic sense. This is perhaps best represented by his statement that "the best readings of art are art"¹⁵. So, rather than simply enumerating knowledge about something, any work (of art) has to enter the aesthetic dimension of that which it purports to be about. Steiner's book is therefore in its own stead, an attempt to produce a work of art. Rather than relying on the methodologies that he is critiquing, Steiner relies on a presentation of his own understanding of 'real presence', something he does by entering into dialogue with other authors. There are no footnotes or endnotes in the book, and yet the text is highly dialogic in nature. To Steiner, this is part of a process of learning by heart, of having an amateur's love for that which is being crafted. The echo for my own study is how spirituality represents this bathing of oneself in that which is being sought, or to paraphrase Steiner, a recognition that 'the best readings of spirituality are spirituality'. My whole argument here is that

14.(...continued)

Spirituality, Education, Narratology: From Wells of Living, Writing, Reading, Ph.D. diss. (Victoria, BC: University of Victoria, 1998); Marilyn J. Llewellyn, *Bringing Forth a World: Spirituality as Pedagogy*, Ph.D. diss. (Cincinnati, Ohio: Union Institute Graduate College, 1998).

15. George Steiner, *Real Presences*, 17.

spirituality cannot be looked at or written on in a second hand manner. This is part of the reason for recognizing the need for a demarcation between writing spirituality and writing *about* spirituality. Using Steiner's perspective, to write spirituality is therefore to seek the 'real presence' of spirit through the vehicle of words.

Another book that begins from essentially the same premise as Steiner's is Parker Palmer's *To Know as We are Known*. At heart, the book is a critique of the reliance of the educational enterprise on objectivity. According to Palmer, this emphasis separates the knower from that which is sought and also isolates the knower from other knowers. Palmer argues instead for the recognition and transformation of the whole educational process to be seen as a process of spiritual formation, one where a community of knowers acknowledge each other as they seek truth.¹⁶ There are obvious problems with Palmer's argument, and most of these have to do with scale and the plurality and diversity of truth.¹⁷ Palmer's idea of truth is too narrowly confined and highly dependant on his concept of community. In an instance where an educational community becomes parochial, one can see why the idea of truth and *obedience* (Palmer's word) to it, could also become narrowly defined. A hopeful approach and part of what this study is seeking to do, is to remain more free about the nature of the realm of truth. Rather than making the realm of truth dependant on communal assent, truth (or spirit) should be located in a trans-human dimension. This obviously introduces an element of uncontrollability to spirituality, which in any case, is the main lesson

16. Marilyn J. Llewellyn's study, *Bringing Forth a World: Spirituality as Pedagogy*, closely resembles Palmer's study in that she displays a mutual concern for the communal dimension of the classroom environ. Her concern is for the recognition of the personhood of both student and teacher, or as she puts it, "the embodiment of the act of teaching as inseparable from one's very being" (pg. iii). Overall it makes a excellent complimentary study to Palmer's.

17. See the following articles for a critique of Palmer's model; Katherine C. McIntosh and Bettylou Linke, "Palmer on Education: To Know As We Are Known", *Chicago Theological Seminary* 79.2 (1989), 10-16; Joyce Q. Erickson, "Parker Palmer's *To Know As We Are Known* Thirteen Years Later", *Christian Scholar's Review* 26.1 (1996), 72-77.

that spirituality has to teach anyone entering the process. For this study, it ultimately entails the elusive task of presencing the realm of spirit through the modes of writing and reading. From that perspective, truth does not reside in the form itself (writing or reading) but rather in the affective process that links the form with the transcendent. Community then takes place through a mutual affirmation of the aesthetical realization of the presence of spirit.

The respective texts by John Miller and James Moffett, *The Holistic Curriculum* and *The Universal Schoolhouse*, are quite complementary studies although Moffett's study is much broader in purview. Both authors are working from what may be termed an ecological base in arguing for a spirituality approach to education. Critical in their view is the understanding that everything is interconnected as a fundamental aspect of the nature of life. For Miller, this translates into the need to instill and restore a contemplative and meditative awareness of interconnectedness into educational curricula. This would include affirming and practicalizing the relationships between intuition and linear thinking, mind and body, between academic disciplines, self and community, self and Earth, and self and Self.¹⁸ At best however, Miller's treatment of these interrelationships are only an overview of what needs to be taken into account for a holistic approach to education.

In Moffett's view, it is the connection with spirituality that should be paramount in education. His theory at its most radical, involves the abrogation of homogenous and pedantic educational approaches in favour of an individualized education which would involve the education of one's core identity as soul. In this approach, the interconnectedness is individualized, implying the need to come to a mature understanding of why one finds oneself on Earth. The answer, according to Moffett, ultimately involves the spiritual development of the human soul as that which should be the fundamental basis of all education.

18. See, John P. Miller, *The Holistic Curriculum*, 'Part Two'.

There are obvious tangents of affirmation between these Miller and Moffett studies and what this particular study is trying to highlight, mainly the understanding that that which is primary to all reality, is that which has been described and ascribed to be spirit. While this study is not focused on the broad review of educational philosophy such as in Miller and Moffett, what it is calling for is a need for the academic recognition of the uniqueness of the study of spirituality. This implies a disciplinary approach and more centrally for this study, the identification and cultivation of the textual approach to spirituality. This seems an important area to address if spirituality is to continue being viewed as a unique and identifiable area of academic study. What the effects of that approach would entail for generic educational approaches can then be reviewed in that light.

The study that displays more closely the narrative and literary demands of writing spirituality is the study by Daniel Scott.¹⁹ Although he does not make the distinction between writing spirituality and writing *about* spirituality, his text displays the tension between these two modes of spirituality writing. The result is a tensed piece of work that becomes an exercise in creativity and experimentation in an attempt to presence the fluidity of spirituality. The results are quite varied, but it is quite clear that Scott has his finger on what he sees as the parabolic necessities of writing spirituality. The technical term he opts for is 'narraturgy', a composite of the words narrative and liturgy which together, represent the continual and repetitive process of a storied spiritual growth and formation. Scott's study is essentially a textual representation of this process. There is obvious repetition to the work, but in my estimation, Scott's study is an example of what may become more and more prevalent in spirituality graduate studies in instances where an author is concerned with expressing the interior dimension and movement of his or her own spirituality. Another key aspect that Scott's study

19. Daniel G. Scott, *Spirituality, Education, Narraturgy: From Wells of Living, Writing, Reading*, Ph.D. dissertation (Victoria, BC: University of Victoria, 1998)

displays and gives evidence for, is the understanding that the necessity to write spirituality in a particular manner is not a fanciful desire for novelty. Instead, it represents a process of being impelled to use this approach if at all one is to remain true to the nature of spirituality. In Scott's case, there is an obvious struggle to wrest himself from the expected format of academic presentation. He employs various techniques to do this, and in my estimation, succeeds in creating a text that allows entrance for a textual sense of the spiritual.

What I hope my study will do is give demarcations and clarity about the necessity of approaching spirituality writing in an interiorly coherent manner and also provide some guidelines on how to read texts written from this approach. My estimation is that a struggle will continue to be experienced by various students whose primary concern is with the study of spirituality. Generally, students who pursue spirituality studies are after much more than information and knowledge about spirituality. Authors that are arguing for the deepening of the formative dimension of education are making that recognition. As already argued, a useful start is to make necessary the distinction between writing spirituality and writing about spirituality. It is the former that this study is concerned about and is seeking to provide a format for. Once that demarcation is fairly established and some ground rules laid out, I feel that these will go a long way in relieving the tensions that many spirituality students go through in trying to give affirmation to their distinctive as both students of and participants in the spiritual quest. It needs to be reiterated however, that the two modes, writing spirituality or writing *about* spirituality, are both valid within their own context and perspective. The problem is that the latter is the favoured format and has much greater clout in academic circles. Due to the inherent assumptions entailed by that approach²⁰, this bias is what would likely undermine the academic study of spirituality and so suffocate the unique elements of originality spirituality may contain. If those unique

20. See the sections "Nexus" and "Inter/disciplines" above.

elements are not affirmed and validated, then spirituality as a transformative movement, may likely seek refuge outside of the academic environment in an effort to preserve its own internal cohesion. However, I hope that this study will alleviate such potential by providing a pattern for some basis on which spirituality may continue to have original and unique validity in the academy.

2

RENDITIONS: Inscribing the Spirit

This chapter explores key elements that go into the process of writing spirituality. In all, five pairs of intertwined fundamentals are examined. These extend from the macrocosmic to the microcosmic. The overall informing backdrop of the chapter is an exploration of the tensions between the visible realm of the text and the invisible realm of spirit that the text is seeking to provide access to. The goal is to work towards the development of an innate awareness and a sense of horizon to the writing of spirituality.

Interstice

Claiming to be able to write spirituality puts one in an awkward position. One feels that to make this claim is to immediately cut oneself off from the very stance that allows one to engage in the process, namely, the cultivation of humility and hiddenness. Notwithstanding this hazard, there seems to be a critical need to address this very issue. As a general rule, and given the nature of the subject, one should not try to impose rigid standards for what spirituality writing is or what it entails. Fortunately, or unfortunately, such standards are largely non-existent in spirituality studies. Where they are present, they tend to be implied or imported from other disciplines, and in a case where they are imported, the potential misdirection of tentative spirituality students is quite enormous. What seems lacking from the student's perspective, is some kind of overall view of what is taking place in the writing of spirituality. What are its informing paradigms? What is it after and how is it doing it? These are the questions that increasingly seem to

need answering. What follows is what I would have expected to read as a student by way of introduction to the task and craft of spirituality writing. It is not a rote presentation of steps to take and with which one would not go wrong. It is rather an immersion, a mapping of the territory and topography that one is dealing with in the study and more centrally, the writing of spirituality.

Reality and Spirit

To write spirituality is to seek to capture in words something that is anchored to our experience of the world and yet within it contains the seeds of what lies beyond it. Spirituality, whether as craft or experience, is a clearing of this place where what is present and what is absent may interact. In this sense, it is a cathartic process of doing away with the dualism that exists between our sense of the visible (what we see, what we experience) and our sense of the invisible (what we sense, what we are enticed to). The assertion is a simple one, namely, that there is much more to what we see than what is immediately visible. What we do not see is a much larger reality and is of much greater import than what we see. Spirituality in this sense is not 'scientism', that which places ultimate value on what is seen. Such an approach to science is always looking for 'a something' as the basis for explaining reality; from matter to atoms; from atoms to protons, neutrons and electrons; from protons and neutrons to quarks; from quarks to strings; from strings to branes, etcetera, etcetera. The tendency, of course, is towards smaller and smaller aspects of reality, but always with the perspective of *a* something in view. Rather than that approach, spirituality asserts that the basis of reality, our experience of it, is grounded not in some-thing but rather in beyond-thingness. The grounds for the exploration of spirituality, along with the writing of spirituality, lie therefore in a philosophical-cosmological understanding of the universe. There are various formulations of the basic assertion. Each of them are a representation of what seems to be the confluence of human understanding on the

ultimate nature of reality, the ground from which it is sprung. In my estimation, this amazing variety must in some sense provide validation for our experience and apprehension of the world as being an echo of the self-affirmation of the hidden ground of reality.

By and large, the history of western philosophy has been a concern with the problem of *Being*, whether metaphysically, ontologically or existentially. Beginning with the early Greek philosophers, prominently Heraclitus, Parmenides, Zeno, Plato and Aristotle, the primary concern was with the intricacies of the relationship between the idea of the One (the basis of all physical reality) and the many things. The crux of the issue was the process of change or transformation, from the One to the Many, with the One being variously figured to be some element, whether water, air, fire or atoms. It was not until Plato (ca.428-ca.348bce) that the idea of a non-material basis to physical reality took root. This idea was further extended and deepened by Plotinus (ca.204-270ce). With Plotinus, we have the beginnings of a mystical philosophy which highlights the *apophatic* (see below) characteristics of thinking about Being in any ultimate sense. First of all, to do so is to immediately acknowledge that the category of Being is not adequate for describing ultimate reality. Plotinus therefore described ultimate reality (the One) with the sense of *transcending* Being or being *beyond* Being. According to Plotinus, the ultimate basis of reality must have no form, designation, definition, divisibility or limit. Consequently, everything said about it has a reifying effect and must be countered with a negation of that very assertion. This dance of affirmation and negation is what constitutes *apophasis* (unsaying or speaking away).¹ That is, it is not the simple negation of affirmations but rather the inherence and transcendence of Being/Beyond-Being, an apophatic/kataphatic dance which through its appearance/disappearance, presences the absence of ultimate reality. Plotinus'

1. See, Ennead 5.5 in *Plotinus: The Enneads*, trans. Stephen MacKeena (London: Penguin Books, 1991). See also, Michael Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

apophatic philosophy is what eventually gave rise to the western mysticism of the *via negativa*, more centrally that of Pseudo-Dionysius and John Scotus Eriugena, which in turn influenced the continental medieval mysticism writings of, among others, Meister Eckhart, Marguerite Porete, Jacob Boehme and Johannes Tauler.

From a more contemporary perspective, perhaps the most extensive attention given to the philosophy of Being is that by Martin Heidegger in his monumental *Being and Time*. Although Heidegger was trying to do something new and unique with the exploration and interpretation of the limits of Being, what is of note is the mystical affinity of Heidegger's philosophy to the mystical writings of Meister Eckhart and Jacob Boehme. Even more interesting is Heidegger's famous 'reversal' or 'revision' towards thinking about the grounds of Being.² As an initial stance to thinking about the form and nature of ultimate reality, the idea of Being is quite problematic because no matter how elaborate one's presentation of Being may be, in the end, as Plotinus clearly understood, one has to tear down whatever edifice one might have erected in that exploration of Being. In some sense, this is part of the draw-back to the western philosophical emphasis on Being as the place to start thinking about the nature of ultimate reality. It is this approach which contributes to the distinct flavour of western mysticism, which in effect, represents a stage by stage process of the gradual unclothing of various forms of thinking about Being and Beyond-Being so that one seeks to realize or transcend those categories in an eventual culmination of union with the ultimate.³

While the west emphasizes thinking about the ultimate in terms of Being and Beyond-Being, the eastern approach is closely represented by the Buddhist

2. See, Martin Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).

3. I have already dealt at length with this issue in a previous study. See, Christopher Dube, *Integrative Transcending: Mysticism Beyond Context and Experience*, MA diss. (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1998), 84-94.

assertion that, *form is emptiness, emptiness is form*.⁴ Here one has to make some initial qualifications because to speak of 'ultimate reality' in a Buddhist sense goes beyond what Buddhism asserts, at least as it is was articulated by Buddha Gautama (ca.566-ca.486bce). That is, according to the Pali tradition, Buddha Gautama was averse to speaking or asserting anything about an ultimate reality.⁵ Instead, his focus was on the overcoming of suffering (*dukkha*) posed precisely by the quest to find some unchangeable ultimate basis to reality. According to the Buddha, it is precisely the false sense of security in an ultimate unchanging reality that fuels human suffering. In a way, Gautama began from the same basis of the transitoriness of the many things just as the early Greek philosophers did by attempting to give an answer to the problem of change (non-permanence, *anicca*). But rather than trying to secure an ultimate basis to reality, an unchanging aspect, Gautama posited that there was no such thing, that all things *are* impermanent. The upshot of this thinking is that reality is interpreted as emptiness (*sunyata*). This of course does not say anything about ultimacy, it only offers a basis upon which all desire is unmasked as an empty futility.

From this general foundation, Buddhism has essentially demarcated into two schools of thought, the Theravada, which considers itself more representative of Buddha Gautama's original teaching, and the Mahayana, which is more accommodative and not surprisingly, more popular. It is Mahayana Buddhism, more specifically Zen Buddhism, which would speak of an ultimate reality. How Buddhism has evolved into this philosophical concern with ultimacy seems to be related to Buddhism's encounter with Chinese and Japanese religion, more

4. See, Masao Abe, "Kenotic God and Dynamic Sunyata", in *The Emptying God: A Buddhist-Jewish-Christian Conversation*, ed. John B. Cobb, Jr., and Christopher Ives (New York: Orbis Books, 1990), 27.

5. P.D. Premasiri argues perceptively, that metaphysical, ontological, or teleological assertions are not at all the goal of Buddhism, at least according to the Pali canonical tradition. See his article, "The Ultimate Goal of Buddhism and the Doctrine of No-Self", in *God, the Self and Nothingness: Reflections Eastern and Western*, ed. Robert E. Carter (New York: Paragon House, 1990), 171-183.

specifically Taoism.⁶ The most recent and most notable attempts at articulating this Buddhist philosophy of ultimacy have been put forward by such scholars as Masao Abe, Daisetz T. Suzuki, Nishida Kitaro and Keiji Nishitani. According to these authors, what we can assert is that the Buddhist interpretation of emptiness (*sunyata*) is but one aspect of the absolute ground of reality. The other aspect is form/fullness. These two aspects are then intricately interwoven into the previously noted dialectic of *form is emptiness, emptiness is form*. Enlightenment, awakening or *nirvana*, is to grasp immediately and intuitively what this entails. But *nirvana* in itself is also not a something to be grasped, for *nirvana* is nothing more than ordinary existence (*samsara*). Consequently, there is no resting place, no final locus or centre to pin ultimate reality to. Although this is a very brief overview, one can immediately appreciate how this Buddhist interpretation of the ground of reality would entice a comparison to what seems to be its western complement, *being* and *beyond-being*.⁷

According to Robert Carter, the general gist of this complementarity is that:

Being and nothingness may *together* add up to a total which yields a more complete, though still only a partial, understanding of the "shadow of the Eternal." God, Godhead, Nothingness, the Ultimate, are ways of speaking about, if not the same reality, then about genuine aspects of, and stages along, the experiential "way" of human spirituality.⁸

What does this have to do with the writing of spirituality? The key answer is that it represents the root, the ground out of which it arises. More specifically, what the preceding points to are the philosophical foundations for interpreting reality as the conjoining of the visible and invisible. Key in these assertions is the understanding that the dialectical constructions are a way apprehending and

6. See Ray Grigg's book which explores this theme, *The Tao of Zen* (Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle, 1994).

7. In this respect, see especially, Robert E. Carter, ed., *God, the Self and Nothingness: Reflections Eastern and Western*, (New York: Paragon House, 1990). See also, Daisetz T. Suzuki, *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist: The Eastern and Western Way* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1969 [1957]).

8. "Introduction," in Robert E. Carter, ed., *God, the Self and Nothingness: Reflections Eastern and Western*, xxxviii.

speaking about the manner in which reality suggests itself to be *necessarily* composed of. It is important to begin here because no matter what else the exploration of spirituality may entail, it is an exploration that at its root is attempting to re-present in an immediate manner, this self-affirmation of reality. The constructions are therefore an aid, a way to begin thinking, but are not in themselves, fixed points along the spectrum of reality. That is, if we are to speak of reality, we really cannot speak of this or that, but rather of ultimacy as occurring in the gaps in-between the mind's apprehension of 'this' and 'that' (being and beyond-being, form and emptiness, etc.). That is, speaking from a western perspective, reality is not *being* (visibility), neither is it *beyond-being* (invisibility). Reality is what is in-between the inter-penetration of *being* and *beyond-being*. The category through which this inter-penetration is manifested is that which we call *spirit*. Spirit is what brings visibility out of invisibility, but this visibility in turn, is not what reality is. Reality is rather the orchestration and interaction of visibility and invisibility. Most times though, we do not get to see reality in this sense, that is, see it in its nakedness, because reality is masked over by visibility. However, when we do get to see, what we see is as it were, the invisibility of the visibility. That is, we see the more, the invisibility inherently present in the visible. It is only in this complete kind of seeing that we get to apprehend reality.

This process of apprehending reality is what Mircea Eliade, following Rudolf Otto, has described as a *hierophany*, "the *act of manifestation* of the sacred".⁹ Echoing Otto, such manifestation of the sacred (or, the holy) is a revelation of the

9. Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, tr. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1959), 11. Unfortunately, Eliade's interpretation of the 'sacred' is highly contextualized in the sense of something that is dependant upon humanity's cultivation of it, hence his dual interpretation of the 'profane' as the absence of that cultivation (see, *ibid.* 20-24). However, in a later work Eliade does seem to consent that the apparent absence of the sacred does not indicate its real absence, but is rather only an indication of its concealment. This is important in that it properly establishes 'the sacred' as a trans-immanent category that belongs to the ultimate. See, Mircea Eliade, *Symbolism, the Sacred, and the Arts*, ed. Diane Apostolos-Cappadona (New York: Crossroad, 1985), 81-85.

numinous, something which expresses itself as grounded in and to be emanating from the divine, the place of origination. What Otto established quite powerfully, is that *sacredness* and *holiness* are inherent qualities of hierophanic manifestation. That is, the secret that hierophanies reveal is the secret that our visible world is sacral. This interpretation differs from the tendency in some studies of religion to interpret the sacred as a construction of the human social landscape.¹⁰ Although this may be the surface appearance, the attempt to construct such social landscape must be seen as an attempt to echo something that is already enticingly present within the human experience of reality, within the universe. In some sense, religiousness is an attempt to arrest, to recapture and recreate this hierophanic quality of existence. But the results of this attempt, to whatever extent, cannot be misrepresented with the source of that desire, the origin of what is being sought.

Writing spirituality, based on the above, may therefore be understood to be the textual manifestation of the sacred. It is an attempt to see and experience something of the numinous aspect of reality through the vehicle of words. Reality, as already argued, is an orchestration, that which happens in-between the gaps of the interaction between the visible and the invisible (being/beyond-being or form/emptiness). What is visible is then seen in a new light, becomes translucent, so that we begin to see the ground of its invisibility. Spirituality writing is the cultivation of this kind of seeing. Whether through subject, expression, style, or diction, the goal is to manifest reality, to show the whole, the visible with the invisible, the invisible in the visible. The invisible is the enticing absence of the depth of reality that beckons us to seek out that very depth, the mystery of what is immediate, to see more than what appears to be. When we get to see, what we

10. See chiefly, Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Doubleday/Anchor Books, 1967); Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and Profane* (see previous note). This interpretative approach mostly arises from Emile Durkheim's early twentieth century studies of religion, see Durkheim's, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, tr. Joseph W. Swain (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1915).

see is the nakedness of the creative process, the spirit hovering over the water. Spirituality writing and reading is the development this depth of seeing, a contemplative eye in the stream of ordinary existence.

There are other constructions of reality and the process of its manifestation that may compliment the preceding ideas, but these can only be hinted at here. For example, we could speak of reality through the mode of *God* and *Godhead*, as some of the western mystics have done, notably Pseudo-Dionysius and Meister Eckhart. We may also explore reality along its *rational* and *non-rational* dimensions, in perhaps the same manner that Rudolf Otto did. Other constructions would be the dimensions of *objectivity* and *subjectivity*, the concepts of *word* and *silence*, *presence* and *absence*, *saying* and *unsaying*, *known* and *unknown*, *one* and *zero*, and so forth. All of these are helpful ways, and to reiterate Robert Carter, they may all be “genuine aspects” of reality, because essentially, they are each saying what appears to be the same thing. That is, this is not so much a coincidence of formulation, but rather a congruency of reference. This congruency does not seem to be arising from the multiplicity of presentations themselves but rather out of something larger, an empty multi-plenteous co-arising source to the universe.¹¹

Ineffability and Indirectness

What is the upshot of the preceding philosophical construction and interpretation of reality and, what does it mean for spirituality and for spirituality writing in particular? The chief effect of interpreting reality in the preceding manner means that the writing of spirituality is at its root, a confrontation with *ineffability*. This term needs to be defined further, but on surface, it refers to the

11. See, J. S. Krüger, *Along Edges. Religion in South Africa: Bushman, Christian, Buddhist* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1995), 274-290.

'impossibility' of putting certain ideas, sensations and experiences into words.¹² With this initial definition, it is easy to see why the idea of expressing ineffability *at all*, could become a contentious issue. Much of the philosophical debate about whether one can use ineffability in reference to linguistic expressions emanates from William James's pivotal use of the word as one of four key characteristics of mystical experience.¹³ According to James, the ineffability of mystical experience lies in that it is primarily a state of 'feeling' rather than an 'intellectual' state, which means that no adequate descriptive expression of it may be given. The only way in which the ineffable experience can be apprehended is through personal and direct participation.

The counter to James' analysis, argued by Peter Appleby, is whether mystical and similar experiences should be considered ineffable 'in principle', or whether the ineffability is simply a reflection of the subject's inability, for whatever reason, to give adequate linguistic expression to the experience.¹⁴ Appleby argues the latter, that these experiences are not ineffable in principle. The idea of his argument is that ineffability is not so much due to the original uniqueness of the experience but rather due to the re-perception of ordinary experience. In other words, all experience is contextual and does not arise from something other than what is already available to the realm of ordinary experience. There is therefore no locus, no permanent basis for the claim of ineffability.¹⁵

Obviously, the nature and basis for the claim of ineffability has to be

12. From the Latin, *ineffabilis*: *in-* + *effabilis* (capable of being expressed). See *Webster's Dictionary* or similar publications.

13. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: The Modern Library, 1902), 371.

14. Peter C. Appleby, "Mysticism and Ineffability", *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 11.3 (1980), 143-166.

15. Appleby's argument is essentially a variation of the thesis argued by Steven Katz and others that mystical experience is entirely a socio-linguistic construction. See various articles in, *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*, ed. Steven T. Katz (London: Sheldon Press, 1978). For the present context, see especially the article by Renford Bambrough, "Intuition and the Inexpressible", 200-213.

qualified and reconciled with these *for* ineffability (James) and *against* ineffability (Appleby) theses. In order to have a fair understanding of what has to take place within the process of writing spirituality and where the question of ineffability comes in, it is necessary to begin with a basic recognition of at least three levels or forms of ineffability, (i) necessary or logical ineffability, (ii) experiential ineffability, and (iii) presentational ineffability.¹⁶ These three aspects of ineffability are clearly interrelated, but they are also distinct enough to merit individual attention.

First off, the basis of *logical ineffability* is referential, meaning it derives from the subject of address. It only enters the discourse in a context where the subject of address is an exploration of the nature of *ultimate* reality. The moment the question of ultimacy is in view, limitlessness becomes central to the discussion. This is where the need to develop a way of speech that does not limit what is at hand becomes necessary.¹⁷ Generally, it works itself out into two possible approaches, either a non-negative *apophasis* (saying/unsaying) or into an apprehension of the immediacy of ultimate reality, such as in the positing of ultimate reality as *emptiness*.¹⁸ What is key here, is that the ineffability demanded by the referential subject is not something that seems to arise from the observer but rather presents itself as being part and parcel of the subject of address. In this context, ineffability is the inability and incapacity of language to present a final locus to ultimate reality. This is important for spirituality writing in at least two respects. Firstly, as an inherent characteristic of the apprehension of reality, ineffability establishes the need for spirituality writing, as far as it is an exploration of the same, to find some basis on which the characteristic of ineffability becomes part and parcel of the text.

16. Part of the problem of the ineffability discussion is that it is largely restricted to a concern with experience per sé, without giving adequate consideration to the larger context in which the discussion must be formulated. For a critique and possible redress to this overemphasis, see Dube, *Integrative Transcending: Mysticism Beyond Context and Experience*.

17. See previous section on "Reality and Spirit".

18. See, *ibid*.

This necessity shall be re-visited later, but at this stage, it is only important to point out that it is something that arises from the same category of necessity as logical ineffability. Secondly, the apprehension of reality, as already argued, comes about as a result of the dynamic movement of the appearance/disappearance of spirit through visibility and invisibility. The writing of spirituality is a participation in this process, a movement and dance with and in the spirit. In this sense, there is no centre, no permanent locus of entrance to the writing which would assure a proper identity of the result. What is important is the cultivation of a space, of an opening where the spirit's revelation of the depth of reality may be glimpsed at.

Some aspects of the arguments for and against *experiential ineffability* have already been briefly explored above. What is important to consider here is that the question of experiential ineffability arises from the hierophanic nature of reality, where, here and there, we sometimes get a glimpse of the sacredness/holiness of reality. If this were not the case, there would be no basis to speak of spirituality at all, indeed no basis for the arising of religiousness within the stream of human consciousness. Our usual way of interpreting this aspect of human existence is through the feeling of wonder and awe, that is, the enticing sense that we just might be in on something much larger than our ordinary everyday lives suggest. These hints or pauses in the ordinary stream of personal consciousness are the basis of experiential ineffability. If anything, it is this ability to wonder that makes us human, gives us the capacity to postulate ultimate meaningfulness (being/fullness), or ultimate depth (beyond-being/emptiness). It is not clear how these hierophanic experiences come about. Cultivation of their possibility, such as in religious ceremonies seems to help, but these seem far from being the determinative locus in our becoming recipients of such experiences. All that seems to happen is that we are sometimes caught unawares by something that touches a chord within us that reminds us that we have been witness to something which contains seeds of where it all begins and ends, clues to the ultimate secret.

Ben-Ami Scharfstein in his very worthwhile work, has allocated the category of psychology to this whole aspect of experiential ineffability.¹⁹ Although there are obvious problems with examining ineffability from a psychological perspective as Scharfstein does, ultimately, ineffability has to touch us at the level of experience. In this way, while logical ineffability is largely intellectual, experiential ineffability is largely affective. The danger however, is to allocate this emotive aspect of ineffability, exclusively or largely, to the human psyche, something which psychological interpretations are prone to do. When interpreted from within those bounds, what seems to get lost is this enticing indication of what seems to be a trans-personal immanent/transcendent dimension, that is, the sense of the potential ground of our own humanness (endless depth/immanence) and the consequent sense of the ultimate kinship between and beyond all things (something larger/transcendence).

At some level, the writing of spirituality has to be able to connect with the experiential sense of the ineffable. This is so central to the whole endeavour that one cannot envision how someone can attempt to write spirituality without a recognition of the possibility that this feeling exists, that there is and can be such a sensation as the presence of spirit, a sensation of seeing into the depth of reality. If experiential ineffability were not a possibility, then the creative urge and the artistic endeavour would be redundant because there would be nothing to reach for, nothing to perceive. From this sense, the writing of spirituality is therefore also an exercise in writing *spiritually*. The task of wording the appearance/disappearance of spirit recalls and anticipates a personal participation in hierophanic experience. The sensed experience of ineffability then becomes the dynamic fulcrum upon which the whole process of writing spirituality turns.

Presentational ineffability presents an immediate paradox in that it juxtaposes

19. Ben-Ami Scharfstein, *Ineffability: The Failure of Words in Philosophy and Religion* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993). See chapter one.

the confession of a lack of expressibility with an actual attempt to overcome it. This point alone has baffled many critics of texts that make this claim, whether it is the literary efforts of mystics, poets, scientists or artists. An influential representation of the kind of critique ineffability texts have been faced with emanates from Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. According to Wittgenstein, the mystical/metaphysical is something which simply manifests itself and so is inexpressible through words.²⁰ Nothing of concern here; but by deducing from this that the only proper subject for philosophy is therefore natural science, Wittgenstein paved the way for the twentieth century philosophical movement of logical positivism, which essentially constituted of a very literal interpretation of the last line in the *Tractatus*, "What we cannot speak about we must pass over into silence".²¹ By this thinking, vast tracts of literary and intellectual efforts in religion, metaphysics and the arts, were removed from the philosophical orbit and as Dan Stiver puts it, were considered "cognitively meaningless".²² The irony of course is the gradual and slow demise of logical positivism and the continued rise of trans-rational forms of intellection such as spirituality, mysticism and meditation. In other words, while the initial thesis that confessions of ineffability should lead to a *literal* silence seems plausible, the only persistently satisfying solution always seems to involve, not silence, but rather a speaking silence, an interactive intertwining of speech and silence which affirms the nature of the subject of address. This is the solution that seems to have any staying power. In other words, in spite of its inherent nature, the ineffable *compels* speech, requires expression, no matter how muted that expression may be. There is

20. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, tr. D.F. Pears & B.F. McGuinness (London and New York: Routledge, 1961), 6.522-6.53; cf. 5.6-5.62.

21. Ibid., 7. It is unlikely that Wittgenstein himself could be called a logical positivist. For one thing, he had a deep appreciation of poetry and considered the *Tractatus* a statement on the end of philosophy. See, Dan R. Stiver, *The Philosophy of Religious Language* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1996), 37-47; 59-67.

22. Stiver, *The Philosophy of Religious Language*, 43.

something within the experience of the ineffable that entices, draws, and yet at the same time commands a sense of awe, something which echoes Rudolf Otto's *mysterium-tremendum*.²³

What is key in this discussion is that there are two sides to the equation, the human dimension, located within the realm of the visible, and the infinite invisible which accounts for the all. The danger of course, is to seek to lock the door to the vast unknown invisible, thereby seeking what seems to be a more sure knowledge. In reality, this actually turns out to be a form of deprivation, something through which human consciousness is suffocated. If anything, humanity displays qualities of having a symbiotic relationship to the invisible. To reiterate, reality and our experience of it seem to require an orchestration of both the visible and invisible. It is from this that we gain the sense of wholeness and the sense that we may be beginning to be what we truly are, what we are called forth to be. Anything else, either the denial of the visible (gnosticism), or the denial of the invisible (scientism/materialism), seem to be inadequate foundations for human life.

The acknowledgement of ineffability and the simultaneous attempt to express that ineffability are therefore not contradictory but are rather an affirmation of reality and life. This mutuality is not a mere opposition or a failure to understand, but rather a process of nourishing the uniquely human as existing on a trans-spiritual plane, a place where the visible and the invisible seem to converge. Perhaps the idea of the human as an orchestration of spirit and matter is not as frivolous as it appears, but is rather a self-affirming and self-commending truth. Soul (human being), may therefore be seen as an original uniqueness of the blend of spirit (the invisible) with matter (the visible). It is because of this that we seem to need proximity to the unknown, need to keep the sense of mystery near; because it affirms who we are. This need, is what presentational ineffability in part, seeks to satisfy. The amazing thing is that even without analyses, our quest

23. See Rudolf Otto's exploration of this theme in *The Idea of the Holy*, chps. 4-6.

to present the ineffable is an ongoing one, that is, it goes on even when we cannot make sense of it. Where logic states that they should not, poets, artists, mystics and people from all levels of life have continued to plumb the depth of the ineffable, usually only with the recourse that it must be done.

Language is not the only mode through which we maintain proximity to the ineffable. However, language is central and key to what is in view here and to the whole process of writing spirituality. In a text that perhaps has not been given its due recognition, Paul van Buren has argued that language, notwithstanding Wittgenstein *et al*, is the perfect vehicle for expressions of ineffability precisely because it represents a field that has edges that touch the unknown. That is, language is elastic rather than being static or contextual.²⁴ When language is viewed strictly from a contextual perspective, it tends to have the reifying effect of boxing us in. Part of the problem, as van Buren astutely points out, is the attendant use of the expression, 'the limits of language'.²⁵ Acknowledging that language has limits, is the same as acknowledging that language is governed by rules and conventions. This is a basic recognition. The problem however, is that it easily lends itself to the idea and image of language as a cage. Why would anyone want to keep hanging onto the walls of the cage when sooner or later it is going to be recognized as a mere futility that does not get one anywhere? But, as van Buren suggests, language is not so limited. It has the potential for limitless fluidity. It has edges. The picture van Buren uses is of a platform of planks whose edges can, by standing on that edge, be extended and restructured.²⁶ With that view, what happens on the edges of language is not a non-event at all, but represents rather,

24. I much prefer van Buren's concept of elasticity to Stiver's juxtaposition of univocal and equivocal language. The idea is not just points of reference but rather a truly fluid dynamic to language. See Dan R. Stiver, *The Philosophy of Religious Language*. Cf., Paul M. van Buren, *The Edges of Language* (New York: Macmillan, 1972).

25. This is the expression Wittgenstein uses in the *Tractatus* (see 5.6-5.62). It is the favoured expression of many contextualist language philosophers.

26. *Ibid.*, 82-83.

the potential for something exciting and new, myriads of variations of originality and creativity. This is where poets, artists and mystics operate and what they do there can hardly be termed 'cognitively meaningless'.

Rather than figuratively sticking to the centre of the platform where the conventions of language are well established and agreed upon, the edges of language yield the promise of extending our understanding into the realm of the unknown. This may involve breaking with convention, changing the accepted rules, but only so we may gain greater knowledge, cover more ground. The qualification, quoting van Buren, is that "there could never be, however, a case of going *beyond* the edges of language".²⁷ That is, what can be realized is only what is gained by the variegated interaction between the known and unknown. We cannot know the unknown *per sé*, in its nakedness, but we can draw the known and unknown into a place where neither one nor the other clearly is. Through this creative synthesis, we create the capacity to touch or glimpse at the depth of the mystery of the unknown. Language then reveals what lies beyond its own visibility.

Timothy Walsh calls this 'beyond', the *dark matter* of words; "the dark umbra enveloping a word's illuminating arc".²⁸ The imagery comes from the cosmological composition of the universe which indicates that over ninety percent of the mass of the universe is made up of an invisible 'stuff' (dark matter/dark energy) which exerts an enormous amount of influence on the way the whole universe operates. Words, according to Walsh, are similarly structured. They continually suggest and are impacted by the wordless. Consequently, words bear the telltale traces of the unknown and are continually gesturing towards it. Similarly, using van Buren's analogy, the edges of language provide us with a

27. *Ibid.*, 96.

28. Timothy Walsh, *The Dark Matter of Words: Absence, Unknowing, and Emptiness in Literature* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1998), 169.

complementary shape of the unknown. That is, even though we do not know the unknown, by the very contours of that unknowing, we acquire a sensation of the potential within the unknown. This interaction of the known and unknown, of words and the wordless, is a continually moving dynamic, a perpetual presence of the potential for discovery. It is this which draws all manner of artists - the never ending ceaselessness of what could be known.

The problem that faces all attempts to capture something of the nature and experience of the ineffable, other than the elusiveness of the ineffable itself, is getting beyond the immediate visibility of the artifacts that one has to work with, whether words, stone, colour, sound or body. That is, the ineffable is not immediately present in any of these but is rather hidden behind, within or beyond them. Rephrasing Walsh; beyond the bright illuminating effect of the artifact is a dark umbra and it is only there that one may begin to get or create the sense of the ineffable. What this means is that all art, as far as it is a quest for the holy, for beauty, for the ineffable, begins in indirectness. It is not the thing in itself that is important but rather its ability to get out of the way in the process of creating the sense of awareness. However, the constant temptation is to make the artifact itself an immediate representation of the holy, to view it as a container rather than a facilitator to the sense of the ineffable. Generally, this is what symbolism ends up becoming, a precursor to idolatry.²⁹ Presenting the ineffable therefore requires a wide-awake cultivation of the negation of the artifact so that it does not calcify into, nor gets to be identified with the source of the sense of awareness. This movement requires a fluid and dynamic fulcrum.

Perhaps the most accessible arena where indirectness is routinely applied is the visual arts. Generally, according to Mark C. Taylor, it has worked itself out

29. Some of the best critiques of symbolism as an answer to the elusivity of the ineffable have been argued by Abraham J. Heschel. See especially his *Man's Quest for God: Studies in Prayer and Symbolism* (New York: Macmillan, 1954), 127-144.

into the large cyclical movements of affirmation (figuring) and rejection (abstraction) within the artistic tradition. The problem however, is that the cycle keeps repeating itself through the alternating ascendance and decline of each of the modes of artistic expression. Taylor's anticipation, something he sees more and more being called for by various artists and architects, is for the cultivation of a third way, an "altarity" that is able to get to the root of this cyclical juxtaposition of figuration and abstraction, something that is able to touch whatever it is that keeps calling for the neither this nor that. According to Taylor:

In this interstitial site, figure is neither erased nor absolutized but is used with and against itself to figure that which eludes figuring. Torn figures mark the trace of something else, something other that *almost* emerges in the cracks of faulty images. This other neither is nor is not - it is neither being nor nonbeing, fullness nor void, immanent nor transcendent. It is more radically other than the other that is the other of the same. I improperly "name" this unnameable other "altarity." Never present without being absent, altarity approaches by withdrawing and withdraws by approaching. This unimaginable approaching withdrawal and withdrawing approach occurs in "events" that transpire in images that represent nothing.³⁰

Taylor announces very well what the indirectness that needs to be attendant to expressions of ineffability should be made up of. That is, they need to get beyond the simple negation of what is immediately in view. The goal of the use of indirectness is not simply to change or force a new perspective but rather that within that very movement, something is captured that recalls the shape and texture of the ineffable. The movement inherent in indirectness therefore needs to be immanently dynamic. Within the fulcrum of this dynamism, at the point it approaches nothingness, is the place where the ineffable may be encountered.

To get back to the central issue; if somehow, through the presentation of the subject, an observer, listener or reader passes beyond the point of recognizing the particularness of the artifact and is no longer concerned with realizing the

30. Mark C. Taylor, *Disfiguring: Art, Architecture, Religion* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 9.

awareness of the ineffable, in that very instant, the possibility of a creative genesis occurs. In that gap, where nothing is being grasped, a forgetful awareness happens. The goal of indirectness is to facilitate this event. In some sense, the realization of its occurrence is always a recollection, a remembrance that something has happened. Obviously there is no *one* way in which the process and goal may be achieved. Different artists, in our case writers, will come at it from different perspectives and will achieve different results. However, what is not variable is the necessity to achieve something of what Earle Coleman describes as a “coincidence of the universal and the particular”.³¹ As already argued, there are other coincidences. For example, we could speak of the coincidence of the invisible and the visible, or of the known and unknown, of words and the wordless, etc. The approach is not to highlight or signify the this over the other, nor to denounce the one in order to realize the other. If anything, the angst we feel, the inability to settle solely and satisfactorily on the one perspective nor the other, whether figuration or disfiguration, is an indication that solace may be found only in the mutual and interpenetrating embrace of both. It is here that reality resides, here that we may participate in the creative genesis, but only by letting go of the desire to be in control of the this or that. Indirectness is a means of letting go of the need to hold onto the shell of the visible on the one hand, or the desire to escape towards the mirage of a gnostic invisibility on the other.

What does the preceding discourse mean for the writing of spirituality? Briefly, it means first and foremost, that writing spirituality is largely an artistic and poetic endeavour. That is, what spirituality writing is after is an articulation of spirit through words. This essentially translates into an awareness of the sense of the ineffable. What is key here is not so much the format or form that the writing takes, but rather its ability to evoke a sense of the presence of spirit (. . . the holy,

31. Earle J. Coleman, *Creativity and Spirituality: Bonds Between Art and Religion* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 33.

the ineffable). This can only be achieved through the dynamic interpenetration of the absence/presence of words and language. Words, the visible artifact in this creative dynamic dance, are made to gesture both towards and away from the sense of their own invisibility, for it is within the edges of this dark, empty, luminescent umbra (Walsh), that the ineffable is encountered. The goal is to have this process work in such a way that the artifact fades from the active frame. It is only then, within this state of an empty forgetful awareness, that the sense of the depth of reality may be garnered. This process is certainly something factored on by the reader, but to a larger extent, it should be something inherent to the text. This is what the challenge of writing spirituality represents and this is why it is should largely be understood to be a poetic and artistic endeavour.

Story and Text

Spirituality writing takes place within a context. It has to be something rooted and earthy, reckoning with and responding to our human locatedness in the universe. There are different ways in which human beings have tried to satisfy the need to be rooted and at home in the earth; through ritual (circumcision, baptism, etc), through group identity (tribes, teams, etc), through ideology (feminism, socialism, etc). All of these are sub-plots of the overall human longing to find a place within what we see as the human story, an overarching story or meta-narrative that accounts for the sense of our origin, where we are, and what our aspirations signify. Generally this is what we have come to identify as the function of *myth*.

The word myth is somewhat problematic due to the polyvalent meanings that tend to be attached to it. Of course, what is not in view here is the colloquial meaning of myth as something that exists only in the realm of fantasy. Apart from this misnomer, the word also has a great tendency to be equated only to those

great overarching narratives of the origins of humanity and the created realm. As a result, our understanding of myth tends to be either frivolous or falsely elevated. What is in danger of being lost is not so much the word itself but rather the very important and central terrain the word used to cover and should be understood as covering.

Myths, according to Krüger, should be understood to be part of the human attempt to see “our ordinary world *sub specie aeternitatis*, in the widest horizon possible”³². That is, they are in this sense, dynamically all-encompassing. They are the *prima facie* frameworks through which human life is filtered through. This is true whether the resultant application is in science, religion or culture. In other words, no matter what evidence is posited to the contrary, we are incapable of living without myth, a meta-narrative or story into which our discoveries and experiences are fitted into. This places myth into a realm that is trans-rational. That is, myths are not products of our reason, they are instead, concepts and assumptions about the nature of reality to which our reason gives its assent to as a condition of being able to think rationally and logically at all. That is, the mind has to begin somewhere and wherever that beginning is posited, a mythic construction of pre-understanding is entailed. Rationality and thinking do not exist except in the penumbra of an all-encompassing *mythos*.³³

In pre-literate cultures, myths are (were) largely oral/aural and are therefore inherently dynamic. They occur within playful inter-penetrative interpretations of the cosmos that allow for a lyrical appreciation and understanding of the world.³⁴ With the textual codification of mythical narratives, this dynamism is effectively

32. J. S. Krüger, *Along Edges*, 3.

33. For further exploration of this theme see especially, Philip Sherrard, *The Sacred in Life and Art* (Ipswich, UK: Golgonooza Press, 1990), 148-159. See also, Sam Keen, *To a Dancing God* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 97.

34. See, J. S. Krüger's exploration of this absence or re-presentation of myth in Bushman culture/religion, *Along Edges*, 295-308.

lost.³⁵ What happens is that instead of myth remaining a fluid interpretation and re-interpretation of encounter with the largesse of reality, it is constantly forced back upon itself to some supposed codified beginning, which in the end is only the place which has been concretized by the appearance of a text. This is fine in a world with one text and one ideology. In a world with many texts and many ideologies, the creation of a meta-narrative or meta-narratives, becomes quite problematic. Where reality has expanded, as in our present context of a world village, the text has to invariably be deconstructed and reconstructed. This requirement, of course, does not occur in an oral/aural context. The expanded reality is simply incorporated into the continuing playful apperception of reality. However, the challenge that such contexts face (if they still exist), is the growing encroachment of dominant cultural world-views.

Post-modernism in many ways represents the apparent death of myth. According to Sam Keen, it represents no less than 'the death of God', an "inability to believe that human life is rendered ultimately meaningful by being incorporated into a story"³⁶. Post-modernist angst is essentially the effect of the absence of a meta-narrative or the presence of a deconstructed one. There are two options, to run and hide one's head in the sand, or to brave the storm and seek to ride it out hoping that in the calm of the aftermath one will be able to perceive where the chips have fallen, in a manner of speaking. The reason to choose the latter approach is that within the ferocious tempest of being so unrooted, there is a promise. As Charles Winquist puts it, "the meaningful absence of a story is the first

35. A consequence of the tendencious calcification of all texts. Note: I am using the word 'text' in its more generic and mundane sense of a written piece of work. The general trend in philosophical discussions of 'text' is to use it, following Roland Barthes, in the sense of something more expansive than the written work. (See, Roland Barthes, "From Work to Text," in *Image, Music, Text*, tr. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 155-164.) I prefer instead, following Paul Ricoeur, to use the word 'revelation' when referring to the expansive aspects of the text. See below, same section, for further analysis.

36. Sam Keen, *To a Dancing God*, 86.

statement about the presence of a story that takes us beyond the emptiness of the moment.³⁷ Another possibility is an enlargement or re-view of the overall story to reflect the multiplenteous possibilities of a widening reality. This, according to William Beardslee, should not represent the loss of our story, only its reorientation:

In the world as it is, one single story is no longer sufficient to give us direction. Whatever the orienting story is with which we identify, it has to be woven into others, and how we do that and still find a way of expressing a genuine loyalty to our faith, or to our country, is what we need to discover. To learn to live in our organizing stories as part of a rich and complex fabric interwoven, interdependent stories is one of the tasks of storytelling today.³⁸

Perhaps a useful part of the reorientation is to revert from myths to stories. Myths, when properly understood, are important, but in their tendency to be totally overarching they do not allow for an easy fluidity in the face of new aspects of reality. The problem is further exacerbated by the codification of these myths into various texts, especially texts that are seen as 'sacred', that is, as providing a holistic view of the cosmos. One of the most interesting aspects of the Bushmen culture that Krüger writes about, is this absence of 'serious' myth, which in itself does not mean the absence of orienting stories. From that sense, it is quite a misnomer to speak of myths in reference to Bushmen stories. The ability to not take oneself too seriously, to allow for the unexpected is key, so:

The ontological boundaries are overstepped and diluted in an all-inclusive reticulation of beings. The acute observation of animal behaviour for which the Bushmen are renowned is linked to a cosmology of interdependence and fluid identity of the various kinds of being; boundaries are deliberately and humorously broken down, or playfully leaped across, and positions are reversed.³⁹

Perhaps it may be too much to add, but this is not because they do not know, but

37. Charles E. Winquist, *Homecoming: Interpretation, Transformation and Individuation*, AAR Studies in Religion 18 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1978), 3.

38. William A. Beardslee, "Stories in the Postmodern World: Orienting and Disorienting", in *Sacred Interconnections: Postmodern Spirituality, Political Economy, and Art*, ed. D. R. Griffin (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1990), 165.

39. J. S. Krüger, *Along Edges*, 305.

rather that in this playful 'deconstruction', if you will, the fundamental story is transpositionally apprehended, but only in the heart, in the secret place where the actual reality can be apprehended. Hidden from the purview of 'serious' observation it becomes thereby, by its hiddenness, more sure, more certain, more deeply felt. If something like this can be recovered in the post-modern context, then as Beardslee argues, it will mean holding more loosely that which we cherish, only because by our willingness to loosen our grip on it we actually prove the tremendous value of its existence to us. In the end, there is something about dogmatism that betrays an absence of love, and displays in its place, the presence of fear. The two of course, are antithetical. So maybe we should tell and hold our stories loosely, realizing that they are partial and not the whole reality. That is, they can be transcended by something larger or can become harbingers for something actually real.

Another approach for the reorientating of myth would be to deepen and root it into our own sense of its presence and history. That is, rather than un-locating myth into the historical incidences of its presence, one seeks to discover and explore the inner regions of its present meaningfulness for oneself. In Sam Keen's view, by taking your own mythos seriously, you just might be able to discover and recover the original source of the tendrils of the overarching myths that touch and shape your own history. This, according to Keen, requires a radical starting point:

Our starting point must be individual biography and history. If I am to discover the holy, it must be in *my* biography and not in the history of Israel. If there is a principle which gives unity and meaning to history it must be something I touch, feel, and experience. . . . If we can discover such a principle at the foundation of personal identity, we have every right to use the ancient language of the holy, and, therefore, to mark out a domain for theological exploration.⁴⁰

What Keen suggests is a "subterranean theology [which] will allow us to weather

40. Sam Keen, *To a Dancing God*, 99-100.

the crisis in spiritual identity through which we are passing"⁴¹. The recovery is possible only because the aquifer of a personal realization of the holy, sources its body of water from a deeper pool. The hope and promise is that we can discover this source. The resultant reversal of stance is good because it allows us, without the recourse to non-negotiable myths, to as it were, retrace our steps and rediscover the origins of those myths. Just maybe, we will discover territories along the way that have lay fallow, untended and uncared for, but which just might hold promise for a new vision of human relationality and for the building of clearer meta-narratives. This would not be a frivolous play on positions, but rather a real re-rooting and deepening of our human need for meta-narrative. Since a meta-narrative by definition must account for the whole of reality and our realities have become polyvalent, our myths, though they need not become polyvalent, now clearly need points of exit and entrance through which new perspectives may be brought into account. If our myths do not do this, that is, if they remain cloaked behind some impervious exterior, only one possibility exists - atrophy, suffocation and a painful death.

The writing of spirituality cannot take place except in the shadow of a personal and universal meta-narrative, a story within which and out of which one draws identity. It is important therefore, in order to make a beginning at all, to have some kind of appreciation of the meta-narrative out of which one is creating and working. Spirituality writing does not take place in a vacuum, nor in the convex of a place that may be termed 'all-myths'. There is only a particularity of the dynamic formative of your own myth/story, where you stand currently within the stream of clashing and jockeying narratives. It is only from that happenstance that one can write. The key is to maintain a fluidity of transformation, a willingness to keep growing amidst the stream of a cacophony of voices and the codifying effect of the text. The latter emanates from the fact that writing

41. Ibid., 105.

spirituality is itself the creation of a text. The challenge this creates is the inherent reification attached to all textuality. In general, a text is by its very nature, an arresting of the dynamic flow of reality, a figuration of what is possible. This reification of the text is something quite apart from the challenge faced by the attempt to write spirituality itself, that is, the challenge of presencing a sense of the spiritual through the vehicle of words.⁴² Where the writing of spirituality succeeds, the effect is not only the re-presentation of an instance of the flow of reality, but also the forging of new possibilities for a reader's interaction with spirit. The text in this sense becomes a catalyst, the disappearing mirror in the process of beholding reality. One does not read the text as much as one experiences the text, awakens the possibility of fresh encounter. The goal is not to discover something that one might use (facts) but rather to acquaint oneself with the sense of the journey, the contours of the story. The text then becomes a tool in the cultivation of spiritual awareness. When a spirituality text succeeds in doing this, textuality is to that extent transcended. Words still exist on the page, and the pages can be formatted into a book and the book can be handled, but that same text now represents the possibility of an engagement with the spiritual. Following Paul Ricoeur, the text now facilitates a revelation, something which resides beyond the text, not bound up or contained by it.⁴³ Thus the text is nothing more than a procession that gets one from point *here* to point *there*, so that one may encounter the living reality. According to Ricoeur, what gets revealed is the possibility of a new world:

Revelation . . . designates the emergence of another concept of truth than truth as adequation, regulated by the criteria of verification and falsification: a concept of truth as manifestation, in the sense of letting be what shows itself. What shows itself is each time the proposing of a world, a world wherein I can

42. See the section "Ineffability and Indirectness" above.

43. See, Paul Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination*, tr. David Pellauer (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 72.

project my ownmost possibilities.⁴⁴

This of course is highly suggestive, because it entices the idea of the *logos* expressed by the author of the Gospel of John: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.*⁴⁵ This idea of the Word, living and enfleshed, totally 'disconstructs' or subverts the idea of Text as Logos. Text is thus made inadequate as a category of reality and only what it points to can be figured as the reality. The *word* (*logos*) is living and dwells among us, the *text* is only a facilitator towards encounter with that living reality. Mark C. Taylor uses these very suggestive ideas in his identification of text with the idea of sacrifice.⁴⁶ What is key to his argument is that the identification of text as sacrifice should be held parallel to the idea of text as generator, that is, text should be viewed as both eucharistic and incarnational. According to Taylor, the process of interplay between text and interpretation creates a dialectic of the enactment of life and death. That is:

. . . a text is not a finished product, but is an ongoing production which continuously emerges in and through the activity of interpretation. . . If the text is not to lie fallow but is to be impregnated, it must be penetrated, ruptured, victimized. . . Dismembering is, paradoxically, a condition of remembering, death the genesis of life.⁴⁷

This continual movement of life and death becomes the means through which we can participate in the becoming of the Word:

Incarnation *irrevocably* erases the disembodied Logos and inscribes a Word which becomes the script enacted in the infinite play of interpretation. When Incarnation is understood as Inscription, we discover Word. Embodied Word is Script(ure), the writing in which we are inscribed and which we inscribe.⁴⁸

44. Ibid., 223. See also p. 232.

45. John 1:1 and 14a, Revised Standard Version.

46. Mark C. Taylor, "Text as Victim," in *Deconstruction and Theology*, by Thomas J. J. Altizer, et. al. (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1982).

47. Ibid., 66-67.

48. Ibid., 71.

From the preceding, one may speak of a spirituality text as something that strives to become a vehicle for a new genesis, the continual transformation and re-transformation (evolution?) of life. It succeeds in doing this only by its ability to disappear, to be dismembered. This disappearance of the text, in the way I am using the term, is what allows for the possibility of the appearance of the reality beyond the text. Subtlety rather than exactitude is what is required in the process. The danger one faces is to always recapitulate, to revert to an accumulation and recitation of facts. Roland Barthes notes that we have a tendency to become scientifically oriented when we lack subtlety.⁴⁹ That is, when our art fails us, we tend to revert to mechanics. The art in the creation of a spirituality text therefore requires persistence in the willingness to take unexpected approaches that continue to allow room for something that may come to take place. Echoing Ricoeur, the text must strive to leave room for revelation, 'letting be what shows itself'. That is, there is no right way of doing it, each subject will create its own path, or more to the context, its own texture. The goal is that which remains the same, that is, the cultivation through words of a space that is entered by something that becomes no less than spirit. This also means that the spirituality text must be enticing, in the words of Barthes, it must be 'pleasurable': "The text you write must prove to me *that it desires me*. This proof exists: it is writing. Writing is: the science of various blisses of language".⁵⁰ One feels pleasure in a text to the extent that it reckons with something already present, though hidden, within the reader. The text entices and reminds one of a familiar scent, something archaic (mythic), that still points to the realness of the source of origin. What this is when we get to glimpse at it, is spirit. The text must entice a mutual witness of spirit to spirit. In this sense, the writing of spirituality texts arises from and responds to a mutual movement of the affirmation of spirit. The basis of this mutual affirmation, as we

49. Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, tr. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), 61.

50. *Ibid.*, 6. Emphasis original.

shall see below, lies much deeper than its final appearance in a region of textuality. It lies in and arises from the intrinsic nature of the whole working of the universe and the modes of our being in it.

Truth and Connectivity

One of the most fascinating developments within contemporary human thinking, something we are only beginning to come to terms with, is the growing tension between spirituality and conventional science. Science is what presently occupies the largest and most influential process of the formulation of the modes in which we carry out inquiry into the context and nature of our locatedness in the universe. So if approaches to inquiry suggested by our new understanding of spirituality are to have any sort of staying power, they somehow have to find a basis on which to contend with scientifically accepted norms and conventions, or alternatively, indicate some basis on which those conventions need be modified or laid aside. There is therefore a growing questioning of conventional science by spirituality and a recognition that if there is going to be a continuing evolution of human consciousness, both science and spirituality need to create a new mode of inquiry and understanding. What is ironical is that in some ways, the questioning of science through spirituality is something that actually arises more from scientific discovery than it does from the discovery of something new emanating from the study and practice of spirituality. In a sense, science having come face to face with its own shadow, is discovering that this shadow is a territory already occupied by *homo religiosus*.

What has happened in science is the expansion of scientific understanding demanded by the discoveries of quantum physics. The roots of this movement emanate from the shift in scientific interpretation from Newtonian physics to Einsteinian physics. Albert Einstein's theories of relativity (special and general) had

the profound effect of shattering Isaac Newton's mechanistic, static clockwork view of the universe, thereby distilling its attendant sense of absolute time. With the advent of Einstein's relativity theories, space and time were now seen as conjoined dynamic concepts which formulate the functioning of the universe. This was the retrospective impact. The prospective impact, perhaps even more profound, were the advances in quantum theory. Quantum physics is very central to what is in view here, so an overview and sketch of its development deserves attention.

Conventional wisdom at the turn of the nineteenth century maintained that light and energy existed and traveled in wave form. However, discoveries in radiation science showed that the wave theory of light did not account for all the properties of radioactive emission, mainly because observation did not fully support the wave theory of light which, as understood then, essentially suggested infinite levels of radiation at high wave frequencies. Actual observation showed that the energy emitted from radiation at different frequencies was finite, and took roughly the shape of a bell distribution curve. The person who provided the basis for solving this quandary was Max Planck.

In 1900, Planck theorized, by way of calculation, that the graph that can be supported by actual observations of radiation experiments can only be supported if radiation energy is emitted in discrete quantities, called *quanta*, *quantum* for singular. In effect, Planck posited that radioactive emissions are non-randomly quantized, that is, they are composed of distinct and discrete units whose energy component was in direct proportion to the frequency of the wave multiplied by a constant (Planck's constant). The higher the frequency, the higher the radioactive energy emitted up to a maximum point when it would begin to require more energy than is emitted to generate that frequency. With this view, theory and observation were made compatible. No-one fully appreciated the import of Planck's theory until Albert Einstein demonstrated in 1905 that Planck's hypothesis

accounted very precisely for the widely demonstrated photoelectric effect, that is, the effect of the emission of electrons from certain metallic surfaces when light was shone on them at various frequencies. Einstein suggested that this could only be accounted for if light is composed of and travels in distinct energy units (photons) in much the same way as Planck had theorized. The significance of this is that it now seemed that light should be regarded as having both the already demonstrated quality of waves (interference) and the quality of particles (photoelectricity), and so indicating a dual wave-particle nature. What was not realized was exactly how these contradictory qualities interacted.

Concomitant developments in the early 1900's mainly through the work of Ernest Rutherford (1910-1913) and Niels Bohr (in 1913) had shown that matter was made of atoms, and that these atoms were composed of particles, namely electrons and protons. It was only a matter of time therefore until someone extended the interpretation of the wave-particle duality of light to sub-atomic particles and this is precisely what Louis Victor de Broglie argued in 1924. As usually happens in scientific discovery, this theory was physically confirmed in a 1925 laboratory accident (subsequently re-created) which showed that electrons seemed to favour certain trajectories of movement while completely avoiding others. The upshot of this demonstrable tendency seemed to confirm a wave quality to the behaviour of electron particles. By 1927, Erwin Schrödinger and Werner Heisenberg had separately worked out the mathematical representations of the particle/wave aspects of sub-atomic particles. With Heisenberg, it precipitated in his famous 1927 'uncertainty principle' which states that the precise position *and* momentum of a sub-atomic particle cannot be simultaneously determined. That is, the increasingly precise determination of one measurement leads to the increasing attendant imprecision of the other. With these demonstrations, quantum theory was well on the way. The final and demonstrable effect of the coming together of all these quantum theories is quite unnerving, although it has

been demonstrated countless times in experiments matching the basic format described below.

Imagine electrons traveling in a container from an electron source to an electron detector, with detector and source separated by a wall with only two openings. Electrons are then made to travel one at a time so that only one electron is in the whole apparatus at any moment. With only one door open, the distribution of where the electrons are detected confirms that electrons behave like particles, since they congregate in the centre area of the detection region and fan out from there. However, with two doors open, again with only one electron traveling from source to detector at any one time and with only that particular electron in the apparatus, the distribution pattern of where the electrons are detected shows an image that indicates that the electrons were interfering with each other. But how could the electrons be interfering with each other, a wave characteristic, when they are not traveling, or being detected, or occupying the apparatus simultaneously? *That*, is the quantum question.

The implications of the quantum nature of electrons (sub-atomic matter) are enormous. First, it suggests spatial non-locality, in that the electrons are somehow able to occupy a space that they are not physically present in, thus interfering with the physically present electron. Physicists call this, 'spooky action at a distance'. Second, it distorts our conception of time as having a past, present or future. As far as quantum physics demonstrates, time seems to be a singular simultaneity that does not separate events into past, present, or future. These two deductions seem to verify Einstein's theory of general relativity in that they postulate a dynamic space-time continuum, but one that seems to transcend both of those categories. As can be imagined from this scenario, the quantum nature of reality was going to cause an endless sequence of head-scratching among scientists and laypeople alike.

Two basic interpretations of quantum physics have surfaced, one

represented by the Copenhagen school of interpretation, as argued by Niels Bohr, Werner Heisenberg and others. The other, considered maverick, is represented by the theories of David Bohm and should be seen as standing in direct succession to Einstein's honorific stand against the Copenhagen group of interpreters. In brief, the Copenhagen interpreters argue that quantum reality is a direct result of the observation process. In other words, we cannot postulate that this is the way things are, only that this is the way things are as we observe them. Reality, from this sense, and all that can be understood, is that which exists in the presence of observation. Einstein's response to this was a guarded *no*. According to Einstein, the inherent uncertainty and probability effects demanded by theories of quantum physics should not be seen as precluding an underlying, though as yet unverifiable, objective order. Einstein tried valiantly, in the last thirty years of his life, to formulate such an objective unifying order but ultimately confessed failure. However, what he seems to have succeeded in doing was impressing the reasonableness of his idea of an all-inclusive though unobserved underlying reality to David Bohm, a contemporary physicist at Princeton. Bohm had written a textbook on quantum theory, much after the Copenhagen line of interpretation. In subsequent discussion meetings about the book with Einstein, Bohm revised his understanding and interpretation of quantum theory. Bohm's revised argument basically postulates that the only way in which to satisfactorily account for the quantum nature of reality is through the recognition of an implicate order that is parallel to our own explicate physical reality. Bohm sees this implicate reality in much the same way we think of a hologram. However, Bohm's ideas go much much further than this so that most conventional physicists simply dismiss or discount him. In most quantum texts propounding the Copenhagen line of thinking, he does not even get a mention, and yet his ideas, it seems to me, are the ones that have faced up most openly to what the quantum nature of reality seems to suggest, essentially that, as suggested by Einstein, a bottom aspect to reality

does exist. The quirky nature of sub-atomic particles is a representation of their participation and interconnectedness to this bottom aspect of reality. The only problem is that it is something that can only be accounted for by being posited in a 'beyond space-time' category, which essentially means that a unifying theorem cannot be constructed simply from objective observation and deduction, but rather through another category of thought that supercedes the observational and the objective.

What we can objectively say however, although most scientists do not, is that quantum particle behaviour suggests the presence of a wavelike reality that is spread out through space-time. At the very least, this basic scenario has to be consented to. From this reflection, the only way in which quantum particle behaviour can then be accounted for would be if the speed of light limitation posited by general relativity was removed. On the other hand, since this sub-quantum wave reality would be in a 'beyond space-time' category perhaps one need not think in terms of spatial locations from and to which light would need to travel. From this sense there would be no need to think of a speed of light limitation because the 'beyond space-time' category would have no distance, no here or there, and no now or then. It is totally mind-boggling of course, and humbling, but that is what our physical reality suggests itself to be grounded in and to be emanating from. The ironical and surprising thing, is that this logical process of thinking is not at all the scientific convention. Science it seems, has opted not to follow its own inherent logic, and has largely refused to take the leap into non-objective reality which the demonstrations in quantum physics seem to demand.⁵¹

51. For more detailed analyses of the development of the ideas of quantum theory, see the following; Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics*, second ed. (Boulder, Co.: Shambhala, 1983), 52-81,150-160, 208-223,309-321; George Gamow, "Quantum Theory" in *Microsoft Encarta 1999 Encyclopedia* (Microsoft Corporation, 1999); Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time* (London: Bantam Books, 1988), 59-76, 171-193; David Lindley, *The End of Physics: The Myth of a Unified Theory* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), (continued...)

No single text has done as much as Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* in establishing the fact that scientific discovery and bases for inquiry move by fits and starts; the now clichéd 'paradigm shift'. Thus, within the frame of scientific enterprise, the sheer force and impact of a fresh idea can force the shedding of old ideas and the embrace of newer, more accurate representations of reality. So far so good. When paradigm shifts occur within the context of a largely singular ideological context, the shift from one paradigm to the next comes handily enough. However, when scientific paradigms involve not just changes of scientific bases but shifts of ideological bases as well, things get more dicey. It cannot be far fetched to postulate that science has never been faced with as great a potential revolutionizing impact as the one represented by the changes necessitated by both the ideological and procedural bases of the new physics of quantum reality. Perhaps only the Copernican and Galilean revolutions are in the same vein.

The key here is that contemporary scientific interpretations emanating from quantum physics constitute a major ideological shift (still in motion), from an objectivist ideology whose last shining brilliance was perhaps produced by Albert Einstein, to the genus of a new scientific frame of mind that requires a wholly different mode of inquiry. It is clearly apparent that objectivist frameworks are simply not adequate to account for the thoroughly involving nature of reality at the subatomic level. The ideal of an objective observer analyzing an uninvolved separate object is, to say the least, completely illusory, simply because there does not seem to be anywhere, a separate stand-alone aspect to reality. Objective idealism simply does not exist, only the results of an inter-connected and therefore

51.(...continued)

62-100; Michael Talbot, *The Holographic Universe* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 1-55; Christian von Baeyer, *Taming the Atom: The Emergence of the Visible Microworld* (New York: Random House, 1992), 20-56, 163-178, 194-211.

participative mode of knowing.⁵²

The problem however, is that this realization requires such a profound change in the ways we think and conduct inquiry, speak and live our lives, it is unlikely that we will ever stop or change until we are really forced to. The changes involved are simply too radical. The irony of this of course, contrary to Kuhn's model, is that by perpetuating what seems to be a falsely based model of reality (conventional objectivism), science has itself become irrational. Even though the alternative modes of discovery and making are in flux, still, it is fair to say that many of the changes entailed by the new view of reality have simply been ignored or shelved. The nuances of this kind of dereliction have been well annunciated by Michael Polanyi. He writes:

We cannot truly account for our acceptance of such theories without endorsing our acknowledgement of a beauty that exhilarates and a profundity that entrances us. Yet the prevailing conception of science, based on the disjunction of subjectivity and objectivity, seeks - and must seek at all costs - to eliminate from science such passionate, personal, human appraisals of theories, or at least to minimize their function to that of a negligible by-play. For modern man has set up as the ideal of knowledge the conception of natural science as a set of statements which is 'objective' in the sense that its substance is entirely determined by observation, even while its presentation may be shaped by convention. This conception, stemming from a craving rooted in the very depths of our culture, would be shattered if the intuition of rationality in nature had to be acknowledged as a justifiable and indeed essential part of scientific theory. That is why scientific theory is represented as a mere economical description of facts; or as embodying a conventional policy for drawing empirical inferences; or as a working hypothesis, suited to man's practical convenience - interpretations that all deliberately overlook the rational core of science.⁵³

The 'rational core of science' is of course that which proceeds precisely on the position that what one can discover is as a direct postulate of what one has already discovered. One proceeds on the basis of committing to an already

52. See, Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics*, 68-69; 141-142.

53. Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 15-16.

suggestively present vision of reality even though one is not yet able to fully comprehend or explain it. This is the fuel and urging passion of a truly objective scientific inquiry.⁵⁴ Following from this, the present general scientific scenario is therefore tantamount to a refusal to remain rational and according to Polanyi, therefore constitutes a “pseudo-substitution . . . used to play down man’s real and indispensable intellectual powers for the sake of maintaining an ‘objectivist’ framework which in fact cannot account for them. It works by defining scientific merit in terms of its relatively trivial features, and making these function then in the same way as the true terms they are supposed to replace”.⁵⁵

What is needed is no less than the acknowledgement and means of embracing and practicalizing the suggestibility of the universe as being fundamentally non-predictable and non-determinative, that is, at least not along the usual ways we have sought to construct what we call objective truth. The developments of quantum theory indicate that we cannot afford and do not have the basis to proceed on the basis that truth is derived only from exactitude, but rather, from the mutual complementarity of things. Therefore a new, but also old, way of understanding truth is needed, namely that of truth as art. The strange thing is that we know this already, and yet somehow, we have fooled ourselves into believing that the truth of determinative certitude exists and can be attained. We now know, that what appears to us to be a precise knowledge is actually founded and grounded upon what Jacob Bronowski, arguing from Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle, calls a region of tolerance:

We cannot ask the world to be exact. If an object (a familiar face, for example) had to be *exactly* the same before we recognized it, we would never recognize it from one day to the next. We recognize the object to be the same one day to the next. We recognize the object to be the same because it is much the same; it is never exactly like it was, it is tolerably like. In the act of recognition, a

54. See, *ibid.*, 64.

55. *Ibid.*, 16-17.

judgement is built in - an area of tolerance of uncertainty.⁵⁶

All knowledge, according to Bronowski, is therefore limited. We cannot attain to God's point of view, ours is and always will be, a perspectival view, built upon the best of what suggests itself to be true, among, all true, multiple possibilities within the region of tolerance. Intolerance, in all its ill-affected ways, emanates from the insistence that there supposedly is a bull's-eye view to truth. Truth: all truth: is derived from a mutuality of representation. It is therefore artistic. What quantum theory impresses on us is that even when it does not appear to be, when you dig deep enough, you still will find truth to be artistic. In this sense, Albert Hofstadter's approach of exploring truth as a continuum that always and must culminate in spiritual truth, is quite insightful. He writes:

Truth about is not the only sense of truth, nor is it the ultimate sense of truth. Truth-about is the first in a sequence of forms of truth on which man must build in order to attain to the truth of his own being. Truth-about is considered here, in the specific form of truth of statement, as such a first stage in a sequence. The last stage is what is here called truth of spirit. Truth of spirit is no longer a truth that belongs merely to cognition, when cognition is thought of as distinguished from will and from the concrete being of man. It is no longer something only knowable. Truth of spirit is first of all a truth of being, where "of" occurs in the possessive, not the objective, case. It is essentially something livable. Where something *is* truly, as that thing, it has truth of being. It is as its own essence requires it to be; it *has* an essence that requires it to be itself. Man's essence is spirit. His truth is truth of spirit. For man, to be truly is to be truly as a spiritual being, in his finitude. Spirit includes cognition, and hence truth in the first sense, as truth-about, is included in truth of spiritual being. But truth of spiritual being goes beyond cognition to the actuality of being itself.⁵⁷

The truth of art, of which the writing of spirituality is part, must therefore be based on the mutual affirmation of spirit. That is, it must partake in and be partaken by spirit if at all it is to succeed. As the post-Einsteinian years accumulate, it seems more and more the case that there may be no objective unifying formula

56. Jacob Bronowski, *The Ascent of Man* (London: Futura Publications, 1981 [1973, BBC]), 230-31.

57. Albert Hofstadter, *Truth and Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), vii-viii.

to reality. In other words, what is being forced upon us is that we must always live with the terror of the power of being creators and artists, that whatever the unifying aspect of reality is, we are in it and of it. Reality has proved to us that at bottom, nothing is predicatively deterministic, that the universe is a web of interrelated realities. This connectivity, it seems, allows us the room to breathe and to choose and to create. The only unifying formula we may therefore be offered is the one of creativity. Such power is of course tremendous, because it entails the possibility for destructiveness. As we continue to unravel the mysteries of reality and of our own being, there is a foreboding that we may not be ready to wield such power. Physically, we not only have the power to create things, but it seems now, beings. We are only realizing, perhaps too late, that with every creation, we are implicitly also creating a myriad of other realities. Every creation of something re-creates something else; our lives, the way we live, our environment, our future. Nothing is untouched because everything is conjoined and interrelated. More fundamentally, we know we cannot predict with absolute certainty how one act of creation will determine the outcome of another measurement of reality. What we always have to live with, is that there is always that region of uncertainty and therefore the need for tolerance to the myriad possibilities of effect built into reality. Objective determinism does not exist. If it really did, life would be a prison, but as it is, life is vulnerable, fragile, exposed, *but*, also vital, and full of a mysterious depth that hints that anything is possible, that we *are* creators. There is only one condition though, we do not know and cannot know the full extent of that which we are creating with absolute certainty. This means that we cannot afford to be creators with bull-headed, single-minded determination. We must therefore learn to think in patterns of inter-connectedness. This creativity requires humility and humbleness. The Buddhists call it *karuna*, compassion. It is not just a personal stance, or a personal determination to be humble, but rather a totally encompassing way of life grounded in the recognition that all reality is one fabric,

that the best and greatest wisdom for life is to do no harm. This means that one cannot live compassionately and then turn around and create something, no matter how valuable in the short term, that in the end does violence to the fabric of reality, because in that same end, it would involve doing violence to oneself. The manner and approach of our creativity must therefore parallel the suggestibility of the model of reality itself, which as we continue to explore, is suggesting itself to be something deeply rooted in the principle of the inter-connectedness of all things and therefore of the attendant need for tolerance and a tentativeness to what we stake the way of things to be. This is the spirit that spirituality writing, along with all artistic creation, must deeply imbibe and re-present.

Authenticity and Inwardness

Writing spirituality, as may be drawn from the preceding, may be seen as a witness to the depth reality of spirit. That is, its validity does not lie in demonstration as much as it lies in mutual affirmation, a witness to something that already is, was, and promises to continue being. What we affirm is our apprehension of the essential nature of reality as grounded and bounded by an unmarked territory of the possibility for truth. It is in that place that artists and scientists alike encounter the hidden dark (mystery), an ever dynamic and fluid happenstance that evades all our efforts to pin it down. How one reacts to this non-objectivity and ungroundedness determines the extent to which spirituality is felt, understood and manifested. I do not think that this apprehension of the depth mystery of reality has much to do with being a right-brain person (subjective /intuitive) or a left-brain person (objective/pragmatic). It is rather the refusal to be short-changed, to seek to be an integrated authentic being rather than this or that. Spirituality is therefore very much the de-structuration of dualism, forming through the apparent juxtaposition of the this and that, something wholly new. It

is a process of healing, of bringing back together what is fissured but which suggests itself to be of a singular primordial origin. The challenge is to find ways through which to traverse the gaps that exist between our realization of the mutual wholeness of spiritual understanding, and the dualistic oppositions so prominently displayed in the ways we have organized our humanity.

If there is a word capable of bringing mortal fear to academic professionals and students alike, perhaps the word 'subjectivity' and its variant 'subjectivism' are good examples. 'Subjectivity' is one of those words able to generate an orbit of a self-perpetuating fear which only finds fulfilment when self-censorship becomes a practiced habit. When that happens, what someone else says is always given more validity than what you yourself have to say. One can easily appreciate how this kind of approach would influence how one responds to the writing and reading of spirituality, which essentially, is a cultivation and nurturing of intuitive originality.

As with most overblown reactions, there is a kernel of truth to the fear of subjectivity. The reaction to the fear of a subjective orientation to spirituality writing is derived from the recognition that all learning takes place in a context of dialogue, which means that one has to dialogue with others in the exploration of ideas. This is a necessary and wise orientation. However, the fear generated by trying to maintain this exclusive orientation is the undermining of individual confidence, creativity and originality, the very things spirituality writing thrives on. Spirituality writing will therefore need some manner of exorcizing the pervasive academic fear of 'subjectivity' and through that process recover a lost region of being so essential to a proper recovery of spirituality. It is doubtful that the word itself can be recovered, since even when clarified, it would still have many other connotations and hazy rootages in existentialism which would need wider and wider interpretation. What would be useful instead, would be the suggestion of another construct which could continue to entice the sense of whole-making that is being suggested by our growing understanding of spirituality. What

is clear is that such a construct would still need to be able to evoke the uniqueness of a spiritual orientation and yet in the same vein, point one to the sense of dialogue demanded by the academic ideal. These two aspects would be represented by the need for the recovery of a holistic way understanding and the necessity of a mutual affirmation to the apprehension of truth.

The construct I am suggesting and have already hinted at, is represented by the word *authenticity*. It is a word which in my view, has the capacity to create a region of inter-reference able to bring the disparate ideas and ideals of academy and spirituality into something that contains a whole view. That is, if what we are going through is an authentic reorientation as suggested by the growth and awareness of spirituality, in the end, we know that nothing will be lost; everything will be recast into an interrelation with everything else as part and parcel of the process of healing the disparateness and disharmony we experience in our relatedness to the cosmos. Authenticity is key to this process, an authenticity garnered from acknowledging not just part of our reality, but the whole of it, the visible *and* invisible.

As can be expected, the word 'authenticity' has both a generic and philosophical usage. Generically, it refers to the genuineness of whatever is under consideration. It is from this generic sense that we pose the colloquial question, 'Is it the genuine article?'. That is, is it something that only appears to be what it looks like? Is there deception involved? Can we count on the article to be genuinely true both internally and externally? From this generic sense, authenticity requires the aligning of what is in view to the whole range of reality that the article in consideration subscribes to. If the article fails to satisfy any stage of this process of subscription to its range of reference, it is considered a fraud, no matter how minuscule the variation in detail. This may be illustrated by the differences in the attitude we hold towards naturally occurring gems, for example diamonds, and those that are humanly grown in laboratory settings. To the naked eye, even the

eye of an expert, the two categories may be indistinguishable, leaving only the test of the diamond's reaction to fluorescent light as the mark of distinction. Minor? Perhaps. But it does show how much we value the authenticity of things.

The philosophical roots of authenticity bear similar recognition as the ones we have assembled from our generic use of the term. Perhaps it should not come as a surprise that the origins of the philosophical usage of authenticity come out of the existentialist movement. According to Samuel Stumpf, the origins of existentialism had to do with a desire to restore the eroding sense of our humanness in the face of an increasingly de-humanizing technology and a detached rationalistic philosophy.⁵⁸ One of the earliest proponents for existential authenticity was Søren Kierkegaard. Being authentic, according to Kierkegaard, always involves an "either/or" dialectic. That is, existence involves the choice to become that which one's essence calls one to be, or to not be. Kierkegaard posits three movements, the aesthetical, the ethical, and the religious, through which an individual is faced with the progressive existential choice of taking into oneself more and more of an awareness of the authenticity of one's being.⁵⁹ The movement from the aesthetical to the ethical involves the relinquishment of sensuousness, away from my own personal wishes towards consideration of their impact on others. From the ethical to the religious, there is a basic recognition that being good is an inadequate category when not derived from a region which transcends one's reality. That is, true goodness emanates and derives from the Absolute. Movement to this final stage requires the relinquishment of all categories of objectivity. This essentially translates into the taking of a risk, Kierkegaard's famous 'leap of faith'. Key in Kierkegaard's dialectics, is the recognition that there can be no true and final authenticity which is not related to an ultimate

58. See, Samuel E. Stumpf, *Socrates to Sartre: A History of Philosophy*, rev. fifth edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994), 481-482.

59. See, *ibid.*, 487-490.

philosophical and cosmological orientation to the universe. The ground into which one's sense of authenticity is rooted is therefore of utmost importance. There has to be a sense of ultimacy about it or else it will fail to provide a continuing and enticing sense of discovery and exploration. That is, nothing but the deepest reality will satisfy one's search for authenticity.

The consideration of authenticity from a more contemporary perspective displays to some extent some of the same considerations as the one's proffered above. For example, Ferrara highlights four categories or characteristics essential to the determination of authenticity for both individual identities and collective identities.⁶⁰ First, there is the need for *coherence* in one's sense of story - past, present and future. Second, the phenomenological sense of one's authenticity must be experientially realized. Ferrara calls this, *vitality*. Third, authenticity requires *depth*: "a person's capacity to have access to his or her own psychic dynamisms and to reflect such awareness in the construction of his or her own identity".⁶¹ The final characteristic of authentic identity in Ferrara's scheme is *maturity*, namely, "the ability and willingness to come to terms with the facticity of the natural and social world, as well as the internal world, without thereby compromising one's coherence and vitality - without becoming another".⁶²

The progressive movements of Ferrara's scheme are apparent enough. What I want to emphasize is the need for *maturity* because it represents the culmination of the acceptance of what Ferraro calls the 'facticity' of the different dimensions of cosmological reality. One cannot over-emphasize the impact of this necessity, as represented for example, by the rethinking required by our exploration of quantum physics in the last section. What that rethinking requires is a recognition of how a

60. See, Alessandro Ferrara, *Reflective Authenticity: Rethinking the Project of Modernity* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 80-106; 112-125.

61. *Ibid.*, 96.

62. *Ibid.*, 100.

falsified sense of personal authenticity can only lead to individualism and separateness, whereas an authenticity grounded in the mutuality of participation in the connectivity of the universe must yield and lead to the cultivation of a community of love, the giving and receiving of compassion. This also means that in the end, all expressions of authentic living and being must be translated into inward realization. According to Joseph Bracken, it is only through the deepening of this realization that we become more true to ourselves and through that, more true to each other:

Authentic subjectivity . . . consists, not in overcoming the particularities of one's standpoint in order to embrace a universal viewpoint shared in common with other individuals, but in getting more deeply in touch with the unique particularity of one's own subjective perspective in order to better appreciate both the similarities with and the differences from the standpoints of other individuals.⁶³

What Bracken's assessment means is that we cannot become more authentic by becoming more removed from the sense of our own uniqueness and originality, something we are prone to do, but rather by accentuating that which is original in us, because it is only through that, that we can enhance the whole. In this sense, the two words, authenticity and inwardness, are complimentary and self-enrooting. That is, they suggest the form, manner and consortium through which the various aspects of spirituality and spirituality writing find personal expression and meaningfulness. Without personal expression and fulfilment, all they are, are ideas out there, ideas that do not actually exist for anyone until they have attained both personal *and* mutual import. They become real and impactful only when they shape and influence my own sense of the authenticity of their truthfulness through a process of inward apprehension which eventually translates into the fruition of representational expression. The challenge and the detraction that one has to face is the fear of the wealth and depth of this personal

63. Joseph A. Bracken, "Authentic Subjectivity and Genuine Objectivity", *Horizons* 11.2 (1985), 291. See especially, pages 300-303.

apprehension of truth. But, where fear is overcome, perfect love finds expression, and expression, according to Charles Taylor, is 'poiēsis': making, creating - the mode and means through which one discovers one's own identity:

I discover myself through my work as an artist, through what I create. My self-discovery passes through a creation, the making of something original and new. I forge a new artistic language - new way of painting, new metre or form of poetry, new way of writing a novel - and through this and this alone I become what I have it in me to be. Self-discovery requires *poiēsis*, making.⁶⁴

The alternative to Taylor's process of art making, of becoming one's true self, is anything but enticing: a world lacking imagination, surprise, or variation; a world of cowering individuals afraid to try anything new in case they upset the average, challenge the norm. We can only imagine such a world, and yet, many times we encourage ourselves to live like that, or require others to bear the burden of doing so for the sake of manageable conformity. The fear of course is unfounded, because only the free person can create, the shackled individual can only copy. Mystics, artists and poets alike have all placed primacy on the inward, only because they have realized, like Taylor, that the door towards who we truly are passes through there. If we are going to discover the unity of our multi-splendoured co-humanity, it will have to come through an utter and flabbergasted apprehension of the depth of the truth we are allowed to glimpse at when our frantic fears have subsided, the clouds have dissipated, and the menacing shadows have receded into the corners of our mind. It is then, only then, that gestation, birthing, insight, clarity, creativity, all come to completion. Such words are the words of Rainer Maria Rilke:

Works of art are of an infinite solitude . . . Only love can touch and hold them and be fair to them. Always trust *yourself* and your own feeling, as opposed to argu-mentations, discussions, or introductions of that sort; if it turns out that you are wrong, then the natural growth of your inner life will eventually guide you to other insights. Allow your judgements their own silent, undisturbed development, which, like all progress, must come from deep within and

64. Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), 62.

cannot be forced or hastened. *Everything* is gestation and then birthing. To let each impression and each embryo of a feeling come to completion, entirely in itself, in the dark, in the unsayable, the unconscious, beyond the reach of one's own understanding, and with deep humility and patience to wait for the hour when a new clarity is born: this alone is what it means to live as an artist.⁶⁵

The conjoining of inwardness and authenticity is the criterion for a new and holistic way of being. In some respects, it is not new at all, but is rather a restoration of the necessity of living in the crux of the conjointness of the visible and invisible and realizing that the inter-penetrative movement of these two aspects of reality is an expression of who we truly are. The spiritual person is therefore someone who refuses to be defined by a bent towards the pursuit of materialism, living life only within the confines defined by the physicality of things. On the other hand, that response does not entail a pendulum swing towards disembodiment, the consideration that the crux of reality must necessarily be located in some other reality other than the one we are in. The crux *is* here, here where we can shape, form and create, here where we can hope, aspire, imagine, dream. Authenticity is the construct that allows us to keep this whole view together, to not be bent towards one or the other. The tendency is always towards the neglect of the one in order to accentuate what we feel are the salient advantages of one over the other, but, removed from its conjointness to the other, the favoured approach inevitably turns out to be perniciously destructive. To be whole then, means to live and express the artistic life, to live within the crux of the realm where we, as it were, spring creation from the ground while not relinquishing our ability to both contemplate and transcend the grounds of that creativity, anchoring and deriving its meaningfulness from the invisible. It is a dance, a *perichoresis*, a *kinesis* and *kenosis*, and what appears to us as we move in and out, phase out and in, is the appearance of something that is and yet, is not. Reality suggests itself to be this. Our participation in this co-creativity of spirit, the

65. Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*, tr. Stephen Mitchell (New York: Random House, 1984), 23-24.

fluid appearing disappearing of things, represents therefore, the death of all ulterior motives and selfishness. The only motivation left is the being of truth and the truth of being.

Interchange

All parts of the preceding have been variations on a theme, a symphony of the reality of spirit and of our requisitioned response to it. The themes are an enticement towards the shedding of the protective exteriors that keep us from being artists in and together with the spirit. What follows from here is my own attempt to actively participate in this process. More perhaps than the proving of any point, it is an attempt to shed my own protective exterior, to explore the vulnerability of trying to follow the briefly luminous presences of spirit in and around the edges of my own life. Both the theme and the forms of expression are closely related to the subject of spirituality. But these need not be coterminous, the textual spiritual can appear in texts whose subjects are as remote from 'spirituality' as can be imagined. What seems to make the difference is the tone, the cadence and accent of the authorship. The subject of the text is only secondary and ancillary. To choose what appears to be a spirituality subject does not necessarily achieve the required result. If anything, it could actually distract from it. However, for purposes of the overall effect of this study, it would seem prudent to choose a theme that is not only derived from a concern with spirituality, but one that also entices the need for a spiritual approach to the writing of the text. This way, considerations and assessments of the spirituality nature of the text can be made without too many distractions.

For purposes of reiteration, the ensuing part of the study (part two) may be viewed as something that is complete in and of itself apart from addresses in parts one and three of the study. The text in part two is primarily geared towards

satisfying the thesis of the study, that is, answering the question of whether there should be a validation and a basis for identifying certain texts as spirituality texts, and of certain approaches to textual presentation and writing as inherently co-arising from the process of writing spirituality. That is, is it possible that the sense or effect of the spiritual can be made accessible through a textual presentation? Although all the parts of this study are working together towards affirming this possibility, one need not look too hard for internal connections between the ensuing section (part two) and the rest of the study (parts one and three). This is because the subjects and process of address are divergent since the informing underlying paradigms for the two approaches are quite different, which in any case, is exactly the point of the study, that the writing of spirituality requires its own unique and inherently coherent framework which affirms the nature of the subject and that this needs to be recognized and given proper validation, especially within the academy.

Part Two

Writing/Reading Spirituality: Praxes

3

RECOLLECTIONS: Improvisations of Words and Worlds

This chapter is an exercise in writing spirituality. The underlying goal is the demonstration of an example of the writing of a spirituality text, and to display the validity of the argument of the study. Three examples of the textual presence of spirit are proffered: the poetic, the narrative, and the thematic/intuitive. In terms of overall orientation, the text is an exploration of the gaps in-between the intercourse of the human quest for meaning, that is, religion in its naked form (spirituality) interacting with various senses of the intimating absence/presence of reality (mystery).

Writing, Creativity and Spirituality

Much of what follows from here arises from an exploration of a personal sense of the spiritual, occurring within, beyond and around me. What I am exploring are vignettes, hints, anticipations and recollections of spiritual encounter. Part of my early focus in the evolution of this study was the lingering idea of spiritual encounter as something of a game, what I was calling 'the divine hide and seek', a provisional title I had given to an earlier proposal for my study. I think this is what I had been trying to articulate, that the senses and sensations of the spirit's presence parallels something of the nuances of a hide and seek game. In both, there is a tension between an actual absence and a complete openness. To the extent that these nuances are properly kept in tension, they become the basis for a surprising and enjoyable mutual encounter of discovery and re-discovery. What I also realized was that the accent with which I had wanted to explore and write the

study in, would not have been broadly persuasive without at some level, an extended argument and rationale for what I would be doing. It seemed that such a presentation could best be carried out within the context of a study such as the present one, which in parallel, goes into much needed detail of the rationale for a spirituality form of writing, that is, a form of writing that cultivates emptiness, openness, silence, and depth, sufficiently enough to give room for the possibility of spiritual encounter.

Some time ago I was in a spirituality graduate seminar titled *Scripture as Text for Spirituality*. One of the assigned texts for the readings was Frances Young's *Virtuoso Theology*.¹ One thing I remember and something that I am still fascinated by, occurred after I had read the book. I was discussing the book before seminar session with some friends when those of us who had read the book through, expressed shock at what Young had done towards the end of her book. She had taken us completely by surprise and we were exchanging mutual stories of appreciative surprise. What we were expressing wonder at, is why it was, in a book of obvious academic slant and some 198 pages long, there were these five pages that were so different, so beautiful, so lucid, that we could not help but wonder at them.² What Young had been writing about in the specific chapter in which those five pages occur had to do with inspiration and improvisation, so it is possible Young had simply been attempting to demonstrate her arguments. But whatever the reasons, the wonder for me is that though I only have a rudimentary memory of the rest of her book, those five pages remain fresh and vivid in my mind. What Young was doing in the five pages could be described as a poetic expression of a remembered spiritual encounter. The challenge of something like that, is how to take the remembrance and put it into words that convey and re-create the sensation. Though it was only briefly and fleetingly in a sea of academic words, I

1. Frances Young, *Virtuoso Theology: The Bible and Interpretation* (Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 1993).

2. See pages 182-186, *ibid*.

think that Young managed it quite well. What I am trying to achieve, over more extensive space, is somewhat similar. If I can emulate something of the crystallization of spiritual sensation within a reader as Young did for me, I will be more than gratified.

Young is not the only author who has attempted to write in the interstices of poetry, memory and spiritual experience. An author who has given this form an extended purview and achieved what I consider to be exemplary work is John Leax. Leax, a poet and professor of English, combines the sensitiveness of an artist and the astuteness of matured wisdom to go about his work. The text I am referring to is Leax's *Grace is Where I Live*.³ Leax's concern is with the essential nature of writing as a creative process, which in and of itself entails the taking of risk and the cultivation of vulnerability. Much too easily, according to Leax, there is an assumption that all writing is of necessity, creative. This, in Leax's view needs to be corrected, since there is such a thing as 'noncreative writing'. He writes:

I have heard of noncreative writing. I read it everyday. I read it in student papers. I read it in interoffice memos. I read it in the newspapers. And I read it in the work of *important* writers. Noncreative writing is destructive writing, writing that destroys either the potential of language to express the nuances of meaning or the potential of human beings to experience their place - a little lower than the angels - in creation. Creative writing is writing that seeks to discover and articulate these potentials. There is surprisingly little of it, for it is difficult, and often writers, mistaking platitude for vision, settle for restating what others have already said. Readers seem to like that, and many writers have become wealthy pandering to them. But creative writing is risky writing. It is living by faith. It is stepping into the dark without a light.⁴

Writing as a creative art means that there is much more going on than the simple construction of suitable phrases or the conveyance of accurate meaning. It is rather that within and beyond the words there exists the possibility of a living experience, something that acknowledges the aliveness of the sources of words. Writing

3. John Leax, *Grace is Where I Live: Writing as a Christian Vocation* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1993).

4. Ibid., 135-136.

spirituality is concerned primarily with just this possibility. Is it all an unrealizable idealism? Perhaps, but the alternative is even more undesirable, for as scary as the process of submission to the demands of writing spirituality are, to abdicate and relinquish those demands is to severely curtail what it means to be human, to be alive. It would be to enter a pact with death. Not physical death, but rather the death of everything else that is part of the enlivening dimension of life. Everything, as I have already argued, suggests that this enlivening dimension is composed of and is animated by an energetic invisibility we call Spirit. What is required is to acknowledge this and to act/write as if this understanding *actually* matters. The hardest thing is to actually work from that basis, because there is such little regard of the necessity for this kind of approach. Further, this kind of spirituality writing seems to require an aversion to public display so that one always feels a tension between the need for expressiveness and hiddenness/silence. The aspiring spirituality writer will have to resolve these tensions in a manner that satisfies his or her own personal inward imperative.

Perhaps one of the most influential and luckiest surprises for contemporary spirituality writing took place with the posthumous publishing of Dag Hammarskjöld's *Markings*.⁵ It seemed to come as a surprise when people discovered that there existed a spiritual and mystical undercurrent to someone who had had a very public persona. What is key for me, is that *Markings* is a remarkable testament of the devotion and attention to the living reality of silence expressed through words. My own estimation is that there are many more 'markings' out there, much more than the few that actually get published. In a sense, what I am seeking to explore here may be viewed as 'markings' of a sort. For me it means attending to the movements of spirit within my life and through that, seeking a resonance and a mutuality of witness with others who are also listening to spirit. There is nothing narcissistic about it, because all of it is grounded in the

5. Dag Hammarskjöld, *Markings*, trans. Leif Sjöberg & W. H. Auden (New York: Knopf, 1964).

understanding that there is no separation between you and me, only the mutuality of relationality, edges where my life touches yours and yours enriches mine.

Another example of creative and imaginative writing that might anchor and provide an informative background for what follows is Jorge Luis Borges' *Labyrinths*.⁶ All I can say here is that Borges has one of the most fiercest imaginations ever to have been put to use in the crafting of words. His *Labyrinths* is one of the few books that I have a habit of pulling off the shelf and re-reading at random. He has never ceased to repeatedly astound and amaze me. As an example of the cultivation of the creative imagination necessary to spirituality writing, I would begin here. I doubt however, that my own attempt to write imaginatively and creatively, could evoke the same wonder and awe as Borges' writing does. Notwithstanding, his skill and artistry remains an ardent inspiration for me.

There are many other texts and authors that I could mention and point a reader towards as representative of spirituality writing, but in order to be brief, I will simply suggest a recollection of the many works and patterns of writing represented by the following authors: Sam Keen, Annie Dillard, Frederick Buechner, Elie Wiesel, Kahlil Gibran, Howard Thurman, Thomas Merton, Abraham Joshua Heschel, Eugene Peterson, Lao Tzu, Rainer Maria Rilke, Kabir, Hafiz. All of these well known authors seem to have a keen sense of what spirituality writing is after and how to go about it. Together with the other authors I have already highlighted, they are some of the most important witnesses for what I am seeking to achieve here and a reminder that what I am attempting has been cultivated by other writers, each from their own unique individual perspectives. With the advent of the academic exploration of spirituality, there has yet to be a systemic recognition of how and why these authors write or wrote in what clearly seems to me, to be a deliberately cultivated tone of general approach. I have sought to cover

6. Jorge Luis Borges, *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings*, ed. Donald Yates & James Irby (New York: New Directions, 1964).

much of the philosophical bases and some of the possible reasons behind this apparent congruency of tone and approach in the preceding section of this study. This particular introduction is simply in addition to that analysis and together, these should provide an adequate foundation and a basic grounding of expectations from the ensuing text.

TRANSMORPHOGENESIS : Metaphors of Spiritual Transformation in Three Acts

Act I

THE GATHERING OF WITNESSES

I am removing cobwebs that lie strewn,
Around the door to my thoughts, my voice, my name.
This door is something I have kept a secret for long now.
But it is a secret I have silently reminded myself of time and again.
Vines grew around it, covering it up so that to the outside,
There was nothing at all. But all along I knew what I concealed.
It is here that I am being called forth,
Here where my name is arising from the secret place.
Do I go in or do I continue to play the ignorant game?
Do I pursue the dream or do I hold to the shadows?

Phantoms arise in my memories.
Clearly I see them, the company of phantoms,
Spirits who relinquished the shore and dove into the labyrinth.
Yes, I see him. It is Borges, in silent recognition of the word.⁷

Away in the distance, another, with halo luminous.
Silent, brooding and glowing with iridescent light,
He raises his head and looks at the hesitant young one,

7. Jorge Luis Borges, *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings*.

Wondering whether this one too will simply linger,
And then like so many others, turn and walk away,
Afeared of the strange becoming. But I look, heart thumping.
The lump in my throat rises like a coarse and bitter fruit.
I have the longing I have been longing. Dare I turn back?
Dare I miss the company of such presences?
He, Kahlil, puts his pen down.⁸ I see he has been drawing.
It is flames around a shadowy figure, hardly traceable.
The flames are flames of transformation. But will he endure?
But it's me. I am the figure in the drawing.

Closer to the gate, these I recognize.
I know them by their light.
Heschel of the fierce lights in his eyes.⁹
I know he has seen someone few have seen.
But in the now he hid behind a quiet reverence.
Those who had eyes to see, saw; others averted their eyes,
Unable to stand the presence of such a one in their midst.
But here, here he is renowned, lauded, a pillar.
I stand, perspirative, aspirative too.
The ones who have gathered, edge closer in.
I think they know the moment of truth is at hand,
Am I of them or am I one who has stumbled here in error?

Hiding quietly behind the others, shy for some reason, is another.
I think it is because in the now he is renowned, applauded,
And all that lauding, seems to him here, so much misplaced.
But he endures it, hiding it behind the reticence of humility.
But I have known this and am not surprised at his hiding.
His face looks more ruddy though, than I figured,
Cherub like, eyes sparkling with a mischievous gratefulness,
That he was snatched away before they had all gotten carried away,
Like Jesus who once escaped right through a murderous crowd.
But I spy him looking, as the company of presences gather,
Greeters actually, assigned to bring this one myself seeking.

8. Kahlil Gibran (1883-1931), Lebanese mystic, poet and artist.

9. Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907-1972), Jewish mystic, poet and philosopher.

The one hiding behind the others, Merton, speaks:

"Do you know why you are here?"¹⁰

I am surprised and do not answer.

"We knew you were coming, but we were not sure,
That you would actually seek out this place or when.
No-one can tell about these things.
Some who promise to come never come.
They revert themselves to the shadows and hide among them.
They smother themselves until they have lost all memory of this place.
We have come because you have opened the door,
So you will know this place actually exists and *is* here.
This way, when you are tempted to forget, you will remember,
How the silent witnesses gathered and bade you come.
You will be made to remember whose company you share,
Where you belong, are from, and are going."
The large one, who speaks these words, extends his hand.
He puts it on my shoulder. I am shied away, but moved.
Thurman is strong.¹¹ I always knew he would be,
He among the others seems very much my voucher,
And unmoved by my trepidation.

Someone else stands close. It is the elder of laughter.
His face is full of gales of it, though he is not laughing now,
I see it anyway, all that laughing. Even now he is chuffed,
Yes that's the word for it, it fits him very much.
He is chuffed; chuffed that I have made it so far.
And the laugh of it, what a fat joke,
That he the jocular elder drew me,
Brought me here to the company of these others.
What a laugh, what a fat joke. But he knew.
He had known all along, what many in the now fail to see,
That much of the spirit is achieved in indirectness,
Than in coming at it headlong.
And the choice of his trade. He hid in it.

10. Thomas Merton (1915-1968), Cistercian monk, mystic and poet.

11. Howard Thurman (1900-1981), African-American mystic, poet and minister.

But those who knew, knew he was a priest, a prophet,
Like Amos, a simple farmer-messenger but prophet.
Some despised, saw what they needed, a peddler of words.
But I had been lucky, the jocular elder, Muggeridge,¹²
Had always been prophet-messenger for me.
So now I, trepid all along,
Begin to be chuffed with him,
Happy at his happiness.

And then another closes in. I am forgetting his name,
Who is this? But I know him, I know I know him.
Oh my God, it's him. But, how? How is he here,
Like someone who would have approached from behind?
He must have, for I do not recall him approaching with the others.
He puts both his hands on my shoulders, squeezes gently,
A sign of approval that I am here. I do not look back.
I stand there and take it, accept his approval of me to the others.
And then I am not surprised he would have come from behind.
That is the only way he could have come.
This one I will not name, a sojourner in the here and now.

I can tell now the gathering is complete, my five witnesses.
Is it a ritual? A ceremony? Is it an appointment of sorts? Perhaps.
But it seems that words, here, such naming, only serves to distract,
So I am encouraged not to name.
It is not said, but the ambience lets me know.
I am not to name, only to recognize and receive.

Someone brings a torch and the elder, Heschel, receives it.
He draws in. The others form a cordon around me.
They shelter the open view and wind, and gather me in.
The elder begins, slowly, deliberately.
I hang my head, averting the questions that come,
Tumbling and cascading down the ridges of my mind.
He tips the torch, and flames tatter and fall upon my body,
First my shoulders and head and then my back. I am leaning.

12. Malcolm Muggeridge (1903-1990), British satirist, writer and prophet.

Thurman steadies me and I straighten. I do not fear.

The flames gather and join hands, lapping each other up,
Flicking to the left and right, up and down my spine,
The tingling sensations of recognition shudder.
Have I been here before? No, it is not that. Do I belong here?
Yes, I belong here, and it is from that I see,
I have been here, have always been, just not arrived.
So now I know why Kahlil had drawn that figure.
This is what he had meant.
Seeing it must have prepared me,
Though I do not recall such preparation.

I am alive like fire. The flames are of one now.
My witnesses take them and smooth them over me
As if they were spreading sand in preparation for writing.
They do not touch me, but smooth the flames.
They all do it, and I burn. I am alive with burning.
I let it burn, I let it all burn. I release it, I give it up.
I let it all rise up to the flames and be consumed.
And the flames. They penetrate my body.
They are not just about me, they are in me now.
They enjoin the one end to the other,
They touch and ember each other.

My awareness hinders. I let it go.
Then I am aflamed. I give and I receive.
I raise my hands and incandescent flames tumble down,
But I raise them still. I receive, I become.
And then I think it is done. The witnesses watch it all.
They see it is done, and they let the fire abet of its will.
I lower my hands of this and my body begins to appear.
Slowly. Though in places, the flames linger.

It is then I am named.
Hazak Shamir - Strong Stone.
It is said by John of the Revelation, that in Heaven are stones,
Giving to each a name only they know.

This naming is of a sort, though not that one of Heaven.
No stone is here given. But the naming recalls,
"Become the name of your stone," it is being said.
So I know why the flame. I know why the name.
I know why the witnesses.
Iridescent testaments of the becoming.

I am being raised, for one by one they lift me.
I am light as air, so easily do they lift me.
By lifting each one bestows a gift, a token of remembrance,
By which they are part of me, and by this binding of fire, I part of them.
For they are flames, that is their true nature, though hidden to the eye.
I accept my lot with them, flame I am, though hidden from the eye.

"Go, go Shamir go. Become," says Thurman who lifts me last.
He places both his great hands on my shoulders,
He squeezes with the affection of approval,
Like that other who had come in from behind.
I stand to go, resplendent, but am reminded by the eye of the elder,
That the brightness is not be held onto, like a thing,
That it is becoming that which one is that counts.
I bow my head and thank.
I turn to the others and express gratitude for their presence.
Muggeridge pats my back with more strength than I expect,
I am edged forward.
It is time to go.

Up in the distance, Kahlil had been watching. Watching still,
He raises his hand. I raise my hand and reciprocate, gratified.
I am walking, backwards slightly, with the one that came from behind.
He urges me. I want to linger, but I must leave.
I do not reside here yet, though I belong and have been welcomed.
We walk gingerly, that one I did not name and I.
He urges still with hand gently patting my back.
We walk silent, moved. But it is I who has been moved,
I know he has been, before, much longer back than I.

And then as we approach the doorway and enter the light of day,

He dissipates, I do not see him anymore. I know why.
I head towards my own garden path and re-enter my dwelling.

Act II

THE OLD MAN AND THE CALLING OF STORKS

The old man bent down to pick it up. The string hung off it like some limp worn out limb. The neck was slightly cracked. It was ruined. Slowly he stretched his taut back up to its full height, a bead of sweat glistening on his furrowed forehead. Now he knew it, how could he have forgotten? The three little boys had pestered him all the way across the field, pleading and gesturing, wanting him or them to play on the one-stringed fiddle. At first he had been resentful, but it was too early in the morning to get into a fight. He had kept on walking, slowly, deliberately, as he always did, but they had been much too insistent and had run up to cut him off, leaving their goats and sheep grazing near the marsh. The three boys stood there arrayed like sentinels in front of him, spread out just wide enough to cut off his route of escape. "Old one, show us your fiddle," the older boy said, already reaching for it. The old man withdrew his hand and looked intently at the young boy. "Now young man, what are you after so early in the morning, didn't you eat breakfast and aren't you supposed to be looking after those goats over there that are already pulling up peanuts in that field?" At the warning, the boy, who had forgotten that he already had his hand on the fiddle, turned his head to take a look at the goats, and with the same motion jerked his hand off pulling the fiddle out of the old man's hand and immediately dropping it. It was an accident, but the old man knew, right there and then. "Oh, I'm sorry, really sorry. I didn't mean to . . . Oh, I'm sorry."

The old man endured the young boy's apologetic prostrations, but he was already engrossed in thought. Did he have the strength? He had not been at ready

for a long, long time. In fact he had totally forgotten about it, the connections had simply not occurred to him till then. “My goodness, how could all of this be happening right now,” the old man thought to himself. “I am an old man, now. Why did this not happen earlier? Why does it come to me when I am about to go to my grave? My young ones are grown and I have grand-children now? What do I do now?” The thoughts came tumbling down like a torrent of slushy mud colouring and coating everything in its wake.

For years the fiddle had hung in the old man’s bedroom, hardly touched. In fact, it was simply a decorative piece now. He had stopped playing it long, long ago. One day, not long after he had first hung it up, his wife had come in and got it wanting to give a little boy something to play with. The old man on spying the transaction had sprung to his feet and stopped the mishap. “No, no, not that one. He can’t use that one. Give him something else to play with.” His wife knowing that much more was at stake than a simple looking fiddle, had hung it back up, making a mental note to herself to follow up this mystery. Over the years, she had tried to catch him unawares and sneak out the truth about the fiddle, but her husband never failed the test. Eventually she just gave up, and the thing had just hung there in their bedroom as the years of living layered their faces like the rings of a tree marking the passage of time. Their two daughters and son had grown up knowing the fiddle was out of bounds, she made sure of that. And now that they were grown and living in the city, she and her husband whiled away the days basking in the sun and enjoying each other’s silence.

One dusky evening, with the sun bright red and threatening the hills on the horizon with fire, the old man’s bosom friend whose village was three songs journey away, came calling. These visits were not unexpected and the pot of stew and vegetables was always topped up at supper to ensure the pleasure of such expected acquaintances. This day, the old man’s friend, another old one, brought along some guavas from one of his trees. The old man liked these ones, the ones

with the thick tightly packed fleshy white. Somehow their palette had always seemed more pointed to him, but he had never been able to convince anyone else of their distinctive taste from the red ones that grew around his own compound. But - friends remember and honour such things. "Aaah, I see your guavas are ripe now," said the old man on receiving the gift, "I have been waiting for these." They chatted for a while, while the old man's wife made ready with supper. "We will eat outside today," she said, "the sun is bright red today." She left it at that but the old ones understood her meaning and gathered their stools to move to the baobab tree, the site of such spiritual excursions.

It was said that baobab trees were places of refuge for travelers who were lost and hungry. It was said that anyone who was traveling, was lost and hungry, but found a baobab tree, could ask at its cusp and would be fed. It was said that even though you cannot see it when you look, every baobab tree is planted by a river. Perhaps this must be true, because baobabs look like the most luscious trees, growing so wide of girth they are like a ballooning tuber about to burst its sides and shoot out the top. But then, it could also be that they have to keep growing like this because no-one seems to know any longer how to entice the stranger's meal out of them. And yet they must keep drawing from the invisible river, hoping that a stranger will come and know how to ask so they can give their bounty. Perhaps the old man knew the meaning of the tree's hospitality since he had a baobab tree on his compound.

Soon, the two friends were joined by the old man's wife. "Hmmm, beef in peanut butter, my favourite," said the old friend excitedly. The old man's wife knew of course, but such things are things only a friend would remember and honour. They ate their meal beside the old baobab tree with the sun covering the earth around them with its blanket of red and orange fire. They spoke patiently to each other, listening closely to all the life around them, for it was said that when the sky was red, the earth was bleeding and in need of help, and during such times

you are not to refuse help to anyone who asks it of you, for it must be the voice of the earth crying out to you.

So the old ones ate, spoke and listened closely. But no-one cried for their help it seemed, not as far as they could tell. But as the meal ended, the old man's friend had said that he was making a fiddle for his grandson to take with him to the city where his son lived. He needed a model. The old man was eager to offer his without hesitation. What are such things between friends? It seemed a straightforward ingenuous request, something not to be thought through in the company of friends. As the day gradually sheathed itself with night and after the meal had long settled, the old man's friend began to say his usual goodbyes, which tended to meander in and out of conversations like an orchestrated and well arranged rehearsal. When they finally rose to go, the old man began to walk his friend and said he would bring the fiddle to him tomorrow since he needed to go to the store to mail a letter to his son that next day. "I will see you then," said his friend as they reached the halfway point, their usual parting place after such exchanges. "I will pick some more guavas for you before you arrive. Be whole, my friend." "Be whole," the old man replied, as he turned to make his way back home.

It was while on the way to his friend's house the next morning that the fiddle got broken. As the three young shepherds hurried off to apprehend their goats, the old man continued to stand there as the memories came tumbling through the years to this moment. Everything had come to this. In some ways he felt he had had it easy, he had been able to live a relatively uninterrupted life. In fact he had simply forgotten about it, this other vocation the soapstone sculptor had wrested out of him. As a young man and aspiring bridegroom, the old man had traveled to the city and sought work as a gardener. It was while working there that the aspiring bridegroom had decided to go and see the old stone city, ruins, as some have called it. Since he was closer to the old city now, an hour's bus ride, it had seemed a great loss to not go and visit the stone city. So on one of his weekends,

closer to the end of his tenure as gardener, the young gardener had packed himself some easy food for a day's excursion to the old city. He would spend the day there, perhaps find a special gift for his bride to be, back in the village.

Early morning, not to lose the day, the expectant young man had arrived at the market to catch the very first bus to the ruined city. When the bus pulled up at the old city, the young man tried to take it all in. Who is it who had lived here? What had been their vision for this place? What is it that had given these ancients cause to come together and gather all these stones into an orchestrated symphony of mutual strengthening? No mortar had been used, simply stone upon stone upon stone of tightly packed and ordered grandeur. As he walked and surveyed the site, he wondered what it is that was hidden in the protruding cone of stones, rising way above heads like a giant head of corn? Perhaps someone had already found out the scandalous truth, but such truths are always hidden, for they would reveal too much of who we are, where we are from and where we are meant to be going. The young man walked slowly among the ancient stones, full of aspirations and questions. He tried to hear the sad song which seemed to whisper between the hidden gaps of their union. From the large enclave he could see the whole valley, smaller groupings of stone, extending far and wide.

Suddenly the whole valley was full of people, the evening mist rising and wafting through the air as pockets of fire were lit to greet the evening sky. He could see it now, how it had been. But this was now and the aged stones were no longer graced with the fire of warmth and some had fallen in places, too tired from holding their form waiting for the warmth of the fire to return. The young man explored it all; allowed the questions their own repose and unanswered resolutions. By the time the sun had grazed the tip of the sky, the young wanderer had nearly reached the summit of the outlook hill, where as he arrived, he was sure prayers for the safety of the city had been made. It was also the logical place to spy out any prospective visitors to the city, whether coming from the left or right, the north or

south, to tell whether they were friend or foe. As he gathered his strength and breath back, there it was below him, the whole city, far and wide. With this vantage, looking at it from above as most things do, it was resplendent, had shape, meaning and purpose.

As the midday sun continued to scratch the roof of the sky, the young man made his descent and mused to himself about an afternoon picnic. He headed to the small market area, not far from where the bus had dropped him off. The craft vendors had all arrived by now, displaying their wares for the passers-by and the visitors to the old city. Right now, the hungry young man, mind still full of imaginations, simply glanced at the different wares without the committed look of a prospective buyer. The perceptive vendors let him pass without enticing him with something to buy. His first idea was for some shade where he could sit and enjoy his food. "Over there under the mopani tree where the elderly carver is working, surrounded by those small and large pieces of half-finished or discarded soapstones, that would do very well and there is lots of room," the young man thought to himself. As the young man circled around to greet the soapstone carver face to face, he in turn raised his head to greet him, pausing from his work. The elderly carver gingerly placed the piece he had been working on, on the ground, a bird, an eagle maybe, or perhaps a hawk. It was as if he had been waiting for the young man's cue for he reached for his own packed lunch and invited the young man to sit. "You've traveled far?", the elderly carver asked matter of factly. "No, not far," the young man answered, "I'm from the city." "Yes, but you are not of the city. Where do you come from?", the carver interjected. "Yes, yes. I am from Musha. I am working in the city. I am soon to be married and will return home as soon as I have gathered a few pennies for the dowry." "Aaah," the elderly carver nodded his head in affirmation.

As their conversation meandered in and out of the gaps between eating and drinking, the young man discovered that the elderly carver had learnt his skill from

his grandfather and father and that they in turn had learnt it from their grandfathers and fathers. As far as the elderly carver knew, their family had always resided in these environs and had been craftsmen and, keepers of a story. It was the idea of the story that piqued the young man's ears. With his mind still full of unresolved questions from his visit to the old city, he was eager to hear the elderly one tell the story. "Tell me, elder. What story is this and why do you keep it?", the young man asked. The elderly one settled back in his stool as he finished his lunch and got ready to tell the story to his young visitor.

"Long, long ago, before the stone city was built, the villagers who lived here were visited by great feathered beings with great white wings. Stork people my son. The stork people came here and gathered the villagers to tell them that they themselves had been stork people who had settled here and through many years of residence had lost their wings and eventually, all memory of their place and family of origin. The stork people said they had come to remind them and to help them gather others so that they too may be made to remember. They told the people that they should build a larger village that could become a centre where others could come and be told the story. The stork people promised that they would send someone there to help direct the building of the village. As they left the wondering villagers, they reminded them to tell others of their visit and of the city to be built. Well my son, many many years passed after this visit of the bird people and many of the villagers forgot them and of their reminder to anticipate the great village. Some said the elders had all been hallucinating and that no such visitors ever came. But one day, after many, many years, someone arrived at the village and announced himself as the master builder. He said he had been sent by the stork people and asked if they had forgotten. The villagers, who by now were beside themselves in disbelief, called the arriver, Munhumutapa, which as you know my son means, "The long and slender person". It is not a name, but rather a physical description. Indeed no-one knows what his real name was. It was this long and

slender person who made the gathering of the stones possible. They quarried them from the hanging rocks and from the hills around here. Many, many from the surrounding villages came and joined in the building. Indeed, it was the beginning of a kingdom of sorts, with Munhumutapa as king, though he himself never claimed to be one. All he said was that he was there to remind them of where they had come from and to point out to those who wished to return, where and how they might return. This is how, I am told, that our family became carvers of stone. Among the other skills that Munhumutapa taught and directed was the carving of soapstone. My ancestors started carving then. What they were to carve was a symbol of the reminder of the story, something so simple that upon looking at it, people would be made to recall right away what Munhumutapa was teaching. What was settled on was this bird, my son. You know it, look here. Some call it the Zimbabwe bird, signifying where some of the oldest carvings of the birds were discovered, in the great house of stone. Can you see down here on the bottom of the bird carving? What do you see? Yes, it's the stone city. So the bird, a reminder of our origin as stork people, is united to the story of the building of the stone city. Together they are a simple parable of where we come from, and where we are meant to return even if we build stone cities for our dwelling here. The bird is always atop of the city. The bird descends, only to rise again. This is it that we carve my son. Look again at the carving of the stone city I have made here. What else do you see? This cone, look, it always has to have a prominent place in the carving. It is said that when someone was really ready to return, even in this life, they would find a key to enter this cone and inside it find the answers to all their questions and through that, unite origin and end in one heart. Those are the ones that become healers and keepers of wisdom. But you have been there, my son, did you see a door anywhere around the cone? There is no door anywhere, and yet there is great treasure inside it, but it is treasure that cannot be seen with the naked eye. Only the one who finds the key of passage into the cone can see the

treasure once he enters. But how does one enter? Such knowledge my son, has long ago seeped into the crevices of the stones of time. But perhaps he who knows how to listen to the stones can find out. I myself do not know such secrets, all I know is that my family are carvers of stone and have been for ages and ages. Here, you take this one that I have recently finished and give it to your bride to be."

As the elderly carver handed him the carving, the young bridegroom to be leaned in to receive it, still in limbo at the incredulity of the story the carver had told him. He thanked him for the gift and with that reception, realized just how much time had gone by. Very soon, the last bus back to the city would arrive and he would have to leave. But he lingered with the carver for a while, and began the process of making a respectful exit. Soon the bus pulled into the terminal across the way. The young man arose to bid his final goodbyes and at that moment noticed the fiddle propped up against the tree. The carver saw him looking at it and asked whether he wanted to buy it. "Yes!", said the young man excitedly. It would be something of his own to remind him of the stone-carver, the story, and the unfolding of this day. "This one carries a great price, are you sure you can afford it?", the carver asked. "Yes. I have enjoyed spending the afternoon with you. It would be an honour to have something of yours." "Very well then," said the elderly one, "you may have it. It is yours. No charge."

The young man was surprised and flattered by the offer. As he reached out to receive it, the carver said to him, "There is only one condition. On the day you break it, you will owe me five storks." "Five storks!", the young man exclaimed, "That is a joke, right?". "Not at all," said the elderly one, "not at all. You will need from that very moment to find five storks and point them towards home. One in each of the five provinces of the country". "How do I do that?", the eager traveler asked. "Real easy. All you do is find five young storks that are lost, but are eager to return home. You will know the ones that are eager to return because they will stand on one foot with one foot raised, resting upon the knee of the other. When

you find them, all you have to do is point at them and say, 'You - the one standing like a stork'. That is all."

The young man was flabbergasted, what was this elderly one talking about? There was something about the way he said it though, that told him he was dead serious and that this was not the first time he had conscripted a young person into such an enterprise. "But where do I find the storks?", the young man asked, still confused at this whole transaction. "Look around you my son. Are you forgetting already. How many storks do you see, right here?" Suddenly, the penny dropped. The elderly one continued, "If I were you, when the time comes, I would go to the large cities where there are many people, and many young and eager storks. Otherwise it would take you ages and ages to find them. Good luck and do not forget our transaction. Five young storks standing on one leg; but - only if the fiddle has broken." "The fiddle? Of course", the young man thought to himself, "this is where this whole weird business started". He could feel its texture in his hand now, the string etched into his hand. Just then, the bus horn sounded for last boarding. "Goodbye, old one, and thank you for the gifts", the young traveler said. "Goodbye. Hurry now, or you will miss the bus." The young man circled to catch the bus, waving goodbye to the strange and elderly carver, and partly to mark the moment for future recollection.

All this had come back to the old man as he stood there on the path, staringly incredulously at the broken fiddle. He thought he had escaped. He had been so careful all through the years, and perhaps his success at eluding the mission had lulled his vigilance. How could he have forgotten? But it was as it should have been, he had been doing it for friendship, and that made it alright. In his thinking, nothing could be lost when done for love and friendship. Perhaps all it signified was that he was now ready, that his life was coming full circle. Right then, standing on the path, he could feel his whole demeanor changing. An impetus entered him, a sudden realization of the preciousness of time and of an

overwhelming desire to live it to the full. The summons had blind-sided him, caught him totally unawares, thereby making its impact even more forceful. He knew some things were going to be different. He would have to tell his wife the whole story and he would have to travel. He would have to keep his eyes open even in the midst of crowds. But he tried not to think too much about such things right then. Right now, he had a friend who needed him and his help. He would continue to his friend's house, perhaps while there try to mend the broken fiddle. The old man gathered all his thoughts and continued on his way.

As the old man neared his friend's compound, he could spy him at a distance, puttering around the guava trees, trying to gather the largest ones. As the friend moved to another tree, he spied his old friend approaching. He raised his hand to wave, clutching two fleshy white guavas. The old man waved back and quickened his brooding pace. By the time the old man had crossed the threshold of his friend's compound, he had the whole story well laid out. He would tell his friend of the long ago unfolding of events and of the impetus that now summoned him. He knew that his friend would listen the whole way through while he told of it. In characteristic manner the friend would momentarily remain silent at the end, brooding, trying to find the right words. And then he would look his old friend in the eye and say something to the effect: 'Such things are of the heart, my friend. Being true to the heart is the most important thing of all. I will be here to look after our households. May your heart go with you wherever you find yourself. May you realize your goal and may the ones who summoned you, carry you on their wings'. As usually happens among those who know each other's hearts, the old man's outline of events unfolded as he had anticipated, all amidst the sampling of guavas, the measuring and crafting of a new fiddle and the tentative and gingerly repair of an older one.

At day's end, after the customary walk of friends to the place where goodbyes were said, the old man walked the rest of the way home, deep in thought

once again. He had saved a little money, and as little as it was, he knew he would only allow himself to take half of it, leaving the rest for his wife for any unexpected eventualities. He knew she would be safe, and though it was not said, he knew the visits from friends would become more frequent. Such things were simply done and not voiced or promised. Any major emergent work would be at the behest of his friend. As it was the lull after harvests and before planting, the old man was determined to make headway right away to make use of the favourable time. Perhaps, the spirits willing, he would be back to his wife and home while the shadow of his departure was still warm.

At home that evening, the old man tried to allow the normal exchange of ideas and recollections between him and his wife to follow their usual path. But his wife knew and had known from his initial greeting after arriving home that something important was ensuing. As much as he, she was crafting the right time and creating the space where she felt something that important could be given leave to be voiced. At supper that night, after the moment was recognized, the pregnant silence where each realized there was nothing else to shadow the hidden guest, the old man knew his time was up, he had to bring the hidden into light.

As the tale unfolded, the old man saw his wife's face light up with understanding at the meaning behind the fiddle and at the reason why her husband had been so careful about it through the years. However, she had long ago forgotten about it and had decided not to pursue the issue further. After the children had grown and left for their jobs and new homes, it had been easy to no longer think about the fiddle at all. As all of this and more was being said, the old man's wife tried to compose herself. Perhaps she could go with him; but she knew it would simply impinge on his free movement. No, she would have to stay, perhaps that way he would be back sooner. But who could know about such things? Perhaps these would be their final hours together. She was arranging these feelings inside herself and integrating all possible eventualities. Was she willing,

was she able? She listened intently, and when she began to hear the pain of her non-response in his voice, re-layering and circling the story, she had only half made up her mind. Yet she spoke, if only to allay his fears for now. "I know this is an important occasion. I know it will be a difficult process for you. I do not remember the last time I saw anyone standing like a stork. How many young children stand like storks? Perhaps there are many, perhaps. Perhaps we do not see because we are not watching. I hope you will find them all. Five storks in five different cities. I wish it were simpler, but the words seem significant, so you must do them that way. I wish you God-speed, please do not hurry. Above all, listen. I know that when it comes to these things, we are never far from the spirits. They are the ones that have chosen this time, so they know it is right. Take your time and allow the storks to appear before you. The spirits are the ones who will bring them. I do not want you to worry about me. I am safe here. We have good neighbours. I will be here when you return. Take all the money you will need. I do not need much here. I might go and visit our son after you have been to his home. But I will be here when you return." The old man kept silence as his wife spoke, and as she finished, he expressed that he wanted to begin right away to make use of the favourable season, so tomorrow would be the best time to leave. As they finished supper, the old man's wife busied herself packing things for her husband's unexpected excursion. There would be no hurry to leave early since he was to catch the afternoon bus. But right now she wanted to be gainfully occupied and to also continue sorting out those lingering doubts she still had.

The old man's plan was to begin his quest in the city closest to the old stone city where the whole unfolding saga had begun. It was also the logical place to begin because it was the one closest to his home and also the city where his son lived and worked. From there he would make his way not far west to the midland city, and from there on to the south city. From the south city, he would travel northeast to the eastern highlands city, finally ending his sojourns in the capital

city traveling west from the highland city. Five cities in all. How long would it take? He had no idea.

As the afternoon of departure wound around, the old man had re-arranged his luggage in order to travel light. Five changes of clothes, warm coat and the woolen hat his wife had knit for him. The fiddle. Yes, the fiddle, he would need that. It would be a perpetual and visual reminder of his sojourns, no matter what they turned out to be. As the old man and his wife walked to the bus depot, up ahead they could spy the old man's friend and his wife awaiting them on the path. The company of friends walked gingerly and ceremonially, like the accompaniment of a young man through the ritual passage to adulthood. The old man and his wife walked close to each other. It was one more way of saying goodbye. They had been going through such motions all since the last evening. By the time the bus had arrived, many such quiet goodbyes had been exchanged among the friends. They would see each other soon they said, hoping with hope that this was true. One final wave and the bus was on its way.

All along the bus journey, the old man kept thinking about the strange soapstone carver who had started him on this journey. Perhaps by now he had long since passed. The old man determined that when his sojourns were over, he would make certain to go again to the old stone city to inquire of the old carver. For now, he must fulfil the summons. What did it all mean? What would it achieve? Whatever it was, and whatever it would result in, the old man knew that it would not be his privilege to know. Perhaps in all of this, there was a great chain of events for which he was only a small part, perhaps a fulcrum, a joint around which some things could turn. That is how he felt about it, how he tried to make sense of his unusual outgoing. This trend of thought did not seem to take long at all, for already the bus had arrived at the main terminal where he would disembark. As the old man stepped out of the bus and oriented himself to the surroundings, the hustle and bustle of the city amassed all around him.

Soon a group of young boys had crowded around the bus with their wheelbarrows to assist the travelers with unloading and ferrying their goods to cars or to other buses. As the old man surveyed the scene, he spotted something. Could this be? There he was, half propping up his body on the hands of the wheel-barrow, one foot raised resting on the inside knee of the other leg. At first the old man was surprised at the unexpected incredulity of it all. Could it really be this easy? Is that all? He felt self-conscious as he thought about it, his feet cemented to earth. He could not feel himself able to move or speak. His mouth was drying out. With determined effort, he tried to speak the words, making sure they carried the right tone and weight. But when he heard himself speak, what he heard was a crackling and uncertain voice. "Yo-u-n-g m-an, you, sta-a-nding, standing like a stork," the old man said pointing at the young boy at the wheel-barrow, almost as an afterthought. The young boy, thinking someone might be addressing him, turned around to face the old man, "Do you need your luggage delivered old one?", the young boy asked expectantly. "No, no, young man. You were standing like a stork," the old man answered. "I was?", the young boy exclaimed and adding quickly, "Where do you need your things delivered?", even though the old man had not committed to anything. The old man sensing the impasse, tried to make an honourable exit, "No, no, young man. I am only carrying the duffel bag and this old fiddle. I do not need your help. You were standing like a stork. Just remember that. Standing like a stork", the old man finished saying, half-turned to go and already making his way to the private taxi site to catch a ride to his son's house. As he walked away he could still see the young boy's look of bewilderment at the brief exchange. He himself felt somewhat awkward and silly, as if he had been caught with his fly down.

As he squeezed into his place in the taxi, the old man kept going over the scene of his exchange with the young boy at the wheel-barrow. Was it that easy? What had been achieved? He couldn't help feeling silly about the whole prospect of

his sojourn and country-wide excursion. For the first time, a feeling of great doubt amassed in his mind, filling him with uncertainty of purpose. Why didn't his wife try to talk him out of it? What about his friend of long ago and many years, why was he so accommodative? The old man wondered long and hard at the forces that might be working together to orchestrate this whole scenario in his life. But then, there had been the sudden and unexpected appearance of that young boy at the bus terminal, as if waiting for him in reception. Perhaps a welcoming harbinger of his journey ahead? Or was it merely coincidence? Perhaps it was a sign, an affirmation of the journey begun? No matter what the answers really were, the old man knew that this first of the five young storks would continue to be a visual reminder of the beginning of his journey. How long would it take? Would it all be as simple and as easy as this first one? For some reason, perhaps intuition, the old man knew that the rest of the journey would not be as straight-forward. Right then, he decided to garner what strength he could from the unveiling of the first stork, he would need to keep reminding himself that there were other forces in on this journey, perhaps the bird-people were watching all this, if so, most likely with amusement and admiration.

Up ahead, the old man spotted his stop. He let go of his thoughts and raised his voice loud enough for the taxi driver to hear, "Next stop driver, thank you". As the old man disembarked, he realized that his visit to his son's family was now merely courteous, his real reason for being in the city had already been achieved. He decided he would only stay two days and during that time try to put out of his mind all thoughts about the journey he was on in order to give all his attention to his now three year old grandson. As he approached his son's house, the old man could see his daughter-in-law and his grandson out on the veranda. The little boy was busy chasing after a soccer ball that didn't seem to want to go wherever it is that he was trying to make it go, whether into his hands or the trajectory of his feet. It was all comical, perhaps that was the goal, just the doing and not the

result. As his daughter-in-law spied the old man approaching, she quickly alerted her son to 'grandpa' who was approaching. The little boy wasn't sure, but he stopped pursuing the ball, looking as if mesmerized by someone who was both a familiar and a stranger. But it was the fiddle that caught his attention, this *was* indeed someone to get to know. The old man scooped him up as he tried to reach for the fiddle, gave him a firm hug and went into those childish plays that grandpas and grandsons sometimes do. While all this was going on, the old man managed to greet his daughter-in-law and pass the greetings of his wife and friends back home. After the bantering, the three of them went inside for afternoon tea, which was something customary for honoured guests. It would only be an hour before the old man's son would arrive from his job at the sugar mill.

The old man spent three days visiting his kin, the final day only because it straddled his son's day off and would allow more time for commiserating. He tried very hard to not let out the real reasons for his visit, allowing his son and daughter-in-law to entertain his visit as merely familial. However, on the final day when it was clear that the old man was not returning home but was carrying on to the midlands city, the looks of wonderment on his son's face were enough to let the old man know that some kind of explanation was in order. All he could manage to work up was that he was fulfilling a promise to visit a very old friend of his. It wasn't actually true, but the old man felt that it was at least 'parabolically' true, and that seemed to make the statement bearable. The unstated fact however, was that the old man did not know anyone he could call on in the midlands city. His hope was that somehow it would not take too long before he found his stork for that region of the country. Otherwise he would have to find some kind of accommodations while he went about his search.

As the old man found himself in a bus again, the now familiar questions came tumbling back into his well rested mind. The distraction of his grandson's playfulness and his daughter-in-law's attentiveness had kept his mind well

occupied. In a way, he had welcomed the reprise, but now he had to face the questioning adversary again. What exactly did he think he was doing? For someone of his mature age, so level headed, why did he think he had to do this? Perhaps, the old stone-carver had meant all this in jest and the now old man had simply misunderstood? Perhaps all the soapstone carver had intended for the then young man was for him to recognize that human beings were from the skies? Yes, that's it, recognition, that is all that's needed. The old man didn't need to go criss-crossing the country trying to actually recognize and call out the figurative storks. In fact, it would be better for him to simply turn back right now and recognize the error of his way. As this trend of thought unfolded, the old man found himself saying aloud, to no-one in particular, "Yes, I recognize. I recognize everything you are saying. And that is all I will do, recognize, that is all, nothing more. So stop wasting your time." Half surprised at his own resolve, the old man settled firmly into his seat and tried to rest his eyes for a nap.

By the time the bus pulled into the city terminal, it was dusk. The old man found himself thinking just how he was going to spend the evening. His immediate thought was for something to eat. As he disembarked he spotted a café, not far from the bus terminal. He wandered over, already deciding on what he could eat. Cornmeal cake and tripe sounded good, he could see it on the menu posted outside the window. Fifteen minutes later the old man was already partway through his meal. The tripe reminded him of his wife, it was not far from how his wife would prepare it, "Not bad, not bad at all. It tastes quite good," the old man thought to himself. Washing down the morsels with water, the old man still hadn't figured out what was ahead for the evening. He decided he would walk the city streets and keep an eye out, who knows, maybe he could get second time lucky. However, something within him somehow doubted such a repeat of his first luck. With duffel bag well-placed on his shoulder and the fiddle hanging limply in his left hand, the old man looked every part the pilgrim, a modern day Moses

escaping into the wilderness hatching up a dismal looking plan to rescue his kin from a self-blinding slavery.

As he walked briskly, the streets were largely deserted, alerting the old man of the futility of his excursion at this time of day. He knew he had been trying to luck it anyway, right now the more important thing would be to decide how and where to spend the night. Largely because of the late hour and because of his unfamiliarity with the city, the old man found himself contemplating the idea of spending the whole night awake or propped up against a warm wall somewhere in the labyrinth of the city walls. He knew that it was not a very welcoming prospect. Who knew what else could happen? He reminded himself to plan his journeys more thoughtfully next time. As he neared a city square and seeing that it was well lit, the old man decided to make his rest here. He would try to stay awake as long as possible and if he dozed off in the process, he hoped it would only be for a few brief moments while his body refreshed. After all, it would only be a mere four hours before the early artisans would be in town - the bakers, newspaper hawkers and cleaners. It was semi-reassuring that the hour was so late. First order of business at sunrise would be to plan his search and to be more clear about what he was doing and how he was doing it, rather than wandering and waiting for accidental encounters to take place. Hazy dreams of little children ensued, each wearing tapped on stork wings, a pageant of sorts, angels on the wing, pretending to fly. The old man could barely remember these snippets of images as he roused himself to find that the city was beginning to arise to attend to the cacophony of activities that gave it life. He got up and tried to pretend as if he had been there waiting for someone to arrive. It had all gone quite uneventfully. The old man was astounded at the ease with which he had drifted off to sleep even in such an open and uncertain place. He promised himself not to repeat this process unless he really had to. Because of the kind of excursion he was on, he realized he might be forced to do it again, but if he could avoid it at all costs, then he would.

Tea and scones. They were still warm, freshly made, part of the advantages of being one of the early risers. The old man ate slowly. His stork-finding could take a while, so right now he needed to arrange a place to stay. The best he could think of was to find some cheap lodgings somewhere, and cheap always meant the far outskirts of the city, usually somewhere where semi-legal residences had been set up by the poor and desperate. Desperate he was, and considering the extent of the journey that lay ahead for him, quite poor. He fit the bill quite nicely. He found himself asking the young man at the next table, probably a messenger of sorts judging from the uniform, "Excuse me young man, do you know where I might find some lodgings, not expensive?" The young man looked the old man over first before replying. Having satisfied himself that he was probably not a city bum, the young man suggested starting at Minetown, but if those were too expensive, he could always try Rivertown. Without a second thought, the old man inquired how he could get to Rivertown. "Well," the young man replied, "take the number five bus and get off at the very last stop. After that you will have to walk about an hour to get to it. Good luck old man. Have to go to work." "That sounds quite good, just right," the old man thought to himself as the young man rose to leave. "Thank you, young man. Have a good day," the old man said waving to the young man.

By the time he got on the number five bus, it was midday. It only took three-quarters and an hour for the bus to arrive at the final stop. It seemed most of the passengers had gotten off by then. Only a handful were left and the old man figured these must be Rivertown residents. He was the last one to get off the bus. He made it a point to trail the others from behind, but when one of the young women stopped to chat with friends branching off to a side street, it wasn't long before the same young woman caught up with him. She was in cheerful spirits and eager to strike up a conversation with him. "Are you visiting your family here old one?", she asked excitedly. "No," the old man replied, "I am actually here looking

for lodgings. Do you know someone who might be renting?" The young woman didn't know someone off hand, but she said she would take him to a friend of her mother's who might have lodgings or know someone who did. As they continued their conversation, the old man couldn't get over the disposition of the young woman, so cheerful and smiling even in the midst of these very humble surroundings. There were no city lights anywhere, as far as he could see, there were no electricity lines either. Obviously this must be one of those 'do it yourself' townships. The old man liked it. He could save money and be among poor people. To him, they were always the best company, uninhibited and unassuming.

When they got to the friend's house, the landlady said she didn't have lodgings available anymore. As she said that, she raised her voice to her next-door neighbour tending her rappini garden asking whether she had any lodgings available. The neighbour straightened up to answer, "Actually no," but adding a question perceptively to the old man, "Are you moving from somewhere with furniture or do you simply want boarding room?" The old man's face brightened up, "Actually, boardings, for a short while. That's what I am looking for." "Well, in that case," replied the neighbour, "you can stay in my son's room. He is away at boarding school, and you can board in his room". Everyone in the company cracked up in laughter at the seeming congruity, relieved too that another neighbourly township problem had been solved. The old man crossed the imaginary border between the residences and waited to be introduced to the room. Since the old man didn't know how long 'a short while' would turn out to be, he thought it safe to say he would need the boardings for as long as a month. No matter how long it took, the old man made a mental note to pay for the whole month even if he found his stork within the week. After all this was settled, the old man didn't feel a sense of urgency to begin his search that very day. He would rest and familiarize himself with his surroundings.

Rivertown was an odd town of sorts. It *was* close to a river, about fifteen

minutes walk from where he would be staying. He noticed that there was a common water-well, most likely pumped from a borehole or perhaps joined to the main waterline. Here and there there were Blair toilets, someone's brilliant idea, he figured. Apparently those who didn't mind the walk, bathed in the river. Others boiled water and washed up in washing rooms behind most of the residences. There was one where he would be staying, but he figured to be washing up in the river, just like some of the others. After he had surveyed the scenery, the old man made his way back. He didn't want his host to be waiting on him in case she had made dinner. As he entered slowly, after knocking briefly on the door, he was greeted with, "Oh, you do not have to knock, this is your home too. I would like you to meet my daughter. She's the smart one. She can read English like I don't know how." The old man was happy to be introduced to the houselady's daughter. He found out she had to walk the hour to the nearest established township in order to go to school. Yet she had that determined look that sometimes crosses a child's face when they see through the schooling system to its real purpose, as a provider for wings to fly, to go and wind-up anywhere where one chooses. The school girl was getting set to go out and fetch some water in a fairly large pail, part of her daily duties. She was courteous and affectionate, passing the old man gingerly on her way out.

Daily living routines quickly cemented themselves around the old man's search for a young stork. He had done the rounds around Rivertown, including walking to Minetown spending hours there looking, longing for that very strange and it seemed now, very unusual stance some people seem to find comforting. But where was he, or was she, the young stork? As he sensed the days piling up, he ventured three days straight into the city, walking its streets up and down all day long for the first day. Nothing. No-one. The second day he only walked half of the day and sat at a park the rest of the afternoon, hoping the miracle would present itself. The third day he hung around the market place and bus terminal where it

seemed most people eventually wound up. Disappointed, the old man just had to head back to Rivertown to stretch his feet and rest his frame.

Already into the last week of his boarding arrangement, the old man could sense the tension mounting. For the past two days he had lingered around Rivertown, still hoping and searching. But, nothing. Day four away from his month-end, the old man just couldn't stand it any longer. He was tired, desperate, and taken with the feeling that he needed to walk it away. He arose to go, immediately meeting the houselady's daughter coming in from school. They exchanged hellos and the old man thought it would do him some good to have some young person's conversational companionship to ease his frantic mind. He decided to wait for her outside as she made ready to fetch water from the common waterpump. As he stood there in the mellow evening sun, the old man inclined his head up to the clear sky and said, "Help me you. You bird-people, you feathered ones help me". It was not something he had thought of doing before. He said it more out of desperation and less out of a need to have his prayer answered. In any case, it made him feel better, that was all. He felt no expectations, just that this was something that had needed saying at that juncture.

As the young school girl came out, out of uniform and carrying her pail, the old man stepped up to join his young companion. She was being inquisitive. They had grown fond of each other during the past days, but had both kept at a distance, allowing each other respectful space, but she wanted to know what he was doing in Rivertown. "I'm looking for someone," the old man answered. "Who are you looking for?", came the easy follow-up. "Well I am looking for someone who is not quite sure who they are, but they sense something, that they are someone, someone from somewhere, like someone. I just need to remind them who they are, so that they can remember this for the rest of their lives. But in order to do that, I need to know I am reminding the right person." The old man realized as he said this that the next logical question would be how he would know

the right one, but fortunately, the old man dodged that one as they neared the well and the young girl's attention was drawn away by her compatriots also gathered to fetch water. She was so eager to see her friends and plan weekend excursions she forgot her conversation and the company of the old man.

The old man stood at a distance and watched as the group of young girls interacted excitedly. There was a definite system and process at work here. There was no physical line made up for pumping the water, but somehow or other, as they gathered around quite arbitrarily, a well made up sequence of fetching water was acted out. The young school girl seemed to have an intuitive sense of all of this, knowing exactly when her turn would come. It didn't take long, and before the old man had anticipated, his young companion already had her pail full of water. She was still in eager conversation, and was not making a move to go back home, just yet. She settled the pail on top of her head after carefully wrapping the cloth she had been carrying into a wreath and placing it on her head first. And then as if settling herself for another minute or two of conversation, she took another posture that seemed to be a well rehearsed sequence of daily ritual. She raised her left foot placing it on her right knee, all the while steadying and gently adjusting the pail of water on her head. All of it was done so matter of factly and ritualistically she was still in mid-conversation as the old man stood at his safe distance, dumbfounded. He watched it all, planning just what he would say, and how he would break the news to his latest recruit. Recruit for what? He wasn't sure. But because he had at least come to know this particular young stork for a while, he felt a need to leave her with as much of a sense of what he was signifying when he made her aware of her stork-nature. He also felt a need to redeem himself from having walked away so quickly from the boy with the wheelbarrow, leaving him bewildered by his statement and overall approach.

Thinking perhaps her companion might be getting tired of waiting, the young girl quickly said her goodbyes, although one could tell this conversational

ritual could have gone on for a while longer. Her first words to the old man were, "I hope I didn't keep you waiting too long old one". "Oh not at all, I enjoyed watching you and your friends getting the water," replied the old man. He paused, let out a bit of a sigh, and decided to launch right away into his calling of the stork. "Do you remember when I said that I was looking for someone here in Rivertown?" "Ye-es," the young girl answered, half unsure of where this was leading. "Well, I found her. It's you. It's you I was looking for. I am here to remind you of who you really are. You may not know it yet, but as you grow up, you will remember more and more. You are of the tribe of the bird people, the ones who gave the vision for the building of the great stone city in our country. You know of it don't you? The gathering of stones and the building of the city was a way of bringing people to one place to communicate the story of our origins. It is said my child, that we are all bird-people that have fallen asleep within the houses of stone. And yet, as we all know, birds have no need for houses of stone, and can escape their bonds the moment they realize their winged nature. That is why the story of the stone city is always tied to the story of the bird, what most are now calling the Zimbabwe bird. Most of those who sleep are so enamoured of the stones however, there is no waking them up. But you. I see you still have a tender spirit. I know because I saw you standing like a stork. That is how I know who I am supposed to call. That is how I know when I find the one I am looking for. I have already found a young boy, just about your age. I still have to find three others young storks like you and that boy, and after that my last life work will be done. I do not know what all this means my child, except that you are to remember always that you are from the stork people, that your tribe of the heart are the bird-people. Remember that. Follow that, and listen to your heart as it will remind you again and again of who you are, and what you must become. I must leave tomorrow, but I am so glad it was you. Imagine, all these days, you were right before my eyes, and I couldn't see, yet I knew, I could have guessed if I had tried. No matter, I am so glad it

turned out to be you. But, I must follow the tradition and only call those I see standing like a stork. And that means those that have one foot planted on earth and the other on the wing and in the wind. Those are the ones I seek. I do not know, but I think such are the ones that are longing for a joining of that which is of the earth and that which is of the spirit. I do not know this, but I am guessing. That is what it seems to mean.”

It didn’t take long before the old man and the young girl were standing at the threshold to go inside the house. The young girl had been quiet as the old man had spoken. Something about the way he had said it had reminded her that this was of great importance and that it was not the time for questions but rather for listening with the heart. She felt singled out, given the secret of her being. Her respect for the strangeness of the old man seemed to deepen. What lay ahead? What did it all mean? She didn’t know. But she felt as if the old man had touched her soul, named her beyond the calling of names.

* * * * *

It had been seven months since the old man had left his village. He was weary to the bone, penniless and hungry. He had hawked all but one set of his clothes, the ones he was wearing. When the time came, he would simply wash them, wring them as much as he could and damp dry them on his body. The only thing he had managed to hold on to was his fiddle. He had taken to playing it more and more often now, especially after he had begun to feel the loneliness and dreariness wrapping itself around his sense of self. And what he played were sorrowful tones that seemed to mirror the state of his desperate situation. Even though he was on the last leg of his spiritual sojourn, he knew he would not be the same old one he had been before beginning his journey. A terrifying sense of despondency kept nudging at him, that somehow, no matter what he had done, whatever the dedication he had displayed, it was all for naught, that whatever he thought he had achieved didn’t mean squat. The old man couldn’t get rid of this

feeling. It snapped right back onto his brown skin every time he tried to pry it off his brain. But it was wrapped into every crevice, laughing out at him like a bad tenant who knew he could not be evicted.

For some weeks now, since his arrival in the large northern city, he had taken to eating from the discards from the vegetable markets. What the fastidious customers could never perceive buying became his delicacies. It was amazing to him, just how real a human being could become, how grounded, how so free of illusions and fears and the influence of others once the false sense of pride was dissipated. He made it a point to wash up every day. There was enough room in the men's toilet at the market for him to wash up. He would go in early morning before the market got crowded, strip naked and stand there unashamed, pouring water all over his body out of a scrap bucket. The ritual seemed to be a battle of wits: "This, this, is not going to beat me. I am a messenger of the great spirits. I will complete my journey even if I have to drop into the ground while doing it. Humiliation is not going to make me turn back. I will finish, I will complete what I began". His mind would then always retrace his steps from the very beginning; that unfortunate young boy at the wheel-barrow, something for which he still felt a pang of regret. He could have done more. And then, Rivertown, his proudest moment. He had gotten to live with a stork-child for a while and he liked what he had seen and what it prefigured. It was as if he had been allowed to see what it was all about, to peer into the spirit and soul of a stork-child up close. He liked to remember what she was like and to imagine that somehow all the stork-children were like her. What a hopeful world, what promise for a fruitful world if all the stork-children were to awaken.

After Rivertown, he had headed to the south city. Not being very conversant with the dialect in that part of the country, he had had to make do with his very rudimentary English. It was pathetic really. It was mostly because of this that he had thought it best to check into a youth hostel so he wouldn't have

to interact with as many people while trying to make his way around. He was in that hostel for two months, half-depressed and half-fearful at his precarious financial situation. He had tried everything. Schools, markets, city streets, bus terminals, not a single one, not even a hint of a raised foot. It wasn't until the independence day celebrations that it happened.

Feeling very down, and wanting to escape the depressing shadowy confines of his dorm, the old man had joined others to watch the tribal dances at the soccer field. It was the Zulu war-dance which did it. In retrospect, it had been quite comical. He must have been about ten, holding the short made-up assegai, thrusting it into the air while throwing his right foot up stomping the air and ground with it. And then out of the blue he seemed to invent a variation in the dance. Rather than raising his foot and stomping all the way down to the ground, he was shuffling the left foot which was on the ground and bringing the right foot only half-way down to the left knee and kicking it back up into the air. Again and again, and again. The old man was beside himself. Quite uncontrollably, tears were welling up into his eyes. Just then, it all seemed right. It seemed to him that he was on the right path and that he mustn't give up, for in giving up he would be dissipating such enthusiasm in the young ones to become inspired. He made his way down the field and walked up to the young boy, took his hand with both of his hands and said to him in stuttered English, "You are a stork, my boy. You are a stork. Good. Good. You are a stork." And then as if to offer a blessing, he rubbed his right hand on the young boy's head and walked away. Feeling emboldened, he checked out of the youth hostel that very day and boarded a bus for the eastern highlands city.

Once in the eastern highlands city, the old man tried to emulate his excursion in Rivertown, but he was stymied at every turn. No matter what he tried, he couldn't find a cheap rental place he thought could lead him to the fourth stork-child. After sleeping in the park for two nights, he knew he just couldn't

survive the cold nights in this part of the country. He had to find accommodations fast, but he couldn't do that either. His savings were precariously low already and he needed to pinch his pennies. It was only a brilliant illumination that saved him. He had been a gardener before, why couldn't he do the same thing now. The moment he had sparked this thought, he headed to the suburbs and walked up and down the streets asking if the house owners needed a gardener. Eight straight "nos", and then at his next try, he came face to face with a notice 'Gardener Wanted'. He was so eager he could hear his heart thumping with anticipation. He rapped on the gate and was brought to the houselady. She was not impressed with his age, but proffered she would need to try him out for a month first, and in that regard wouldn't pay him except for the accommodations and food. As the old man listened, he knew he was listening to a well rehearsed and oft-repeated line of reasoning. He knew he was being taken on the high road, but then, he was also not letting out what his real motive for the job was. He felt a justified mutual sense of robbery. He and this scheming lady deserved each other.

What the old man hadn't anticipated was how difficult it would be for him to even attempt to get away to go about his real reasons for being in that part of the country. When he wasn't puttering around the garden and house, he was always on endless errands, to the post office, to the grocery store, to the neighbours, to the vegetable market, it was endless, and it seemed to him there mustn't be any other household on earth so disorganized. And to add salt to the wound, after the month was out and as he was looking forward to at least getting some financial reward for his many and endless erratic labours, the house-lady had the gall to tell him his gardening was just so-so, so she would only pay him 'so-much'. The old man's heart sank, right then he knew he needed to get away from there fast, but he was pretty much at the mercy of this tyrannical lady. It seemed to him it was no wonder this had been the only household he had come across that had a sign out-front actually advertising for a gardener. But he would take these

beans and eat them, just no-one expect him, spirit or human, to like them. It wasn't until well into the second month when the houselady's daughter came home from boarding school that he found his fourth stork.

The daughter had been back home for only three days when the old man discovered that part of his new role would be to play chaperone to this smaller-scale version of her mother. "Mommy, I'm going to meet my friends at community centre, okay. We are going to play basketball. See you later." No answer, no yes or no, except, "Old one go with her, I don't want her getting into trouble there. You know how young boys are." The old man dropped the hose he was holding and shut off the water. He could tell he wasn't quite welcome on this trip, most likely a rendezvous to meet a boyfriend, and sure enough, that was the agenda, she and her friend and two prideful boys, sure at their prowess with the young girls. They were only eager to get rid of the old man's company, "Old man, you stay here, okay. We'll be back soon." The old man was only willing to accommodate. He chose the uppermost wooden bench in the stands beside the basketball court. There was a group of young people playing there, not much younger than the houselady's daughter. They were eager, so full of energy, up and down, up and down, arguments galore, and then 'half-time', though it seemed it was only because one of the boys had decided he was tired and so called out 'half-time'. The rest obliged and that's when he saw her. After all the others had sat down, she continued to play and was practicing some shots. One of the practice routines involved standing with one leg propped up on the lateral knee and using only one hand to shoot the basket. It was a netball move as the old man soon gathered from the boy who had called the imaginary half-time. "Stop that netball stuff," the boy said to the girl on the court, "this is b-a-s-k-e-t-ball, not netball." "Aaah, leave her alone," the others piped up.

This seemed to be the old man's cue. He got down from the stands and walked up to the netball-basketball girl. She wasn't sure what he was up to, but

she stood her ground waiting to find out. Perhaps he needed some directions or some help. As he approached, the old man asked, "Young lady, may I speak with you?" "Yes old one, may I help. Do you need some help?" "No, no, I just need a moment of your time," the old man was eager to do this right, he didn't want a repeat of the wheel-barrow incident. "Do you know what the Zimbabwe bird is?", the old man asked. "Yes, yes of course. I do," the young girl replied. After that the old man continued, "Well, I am here to tell you what you probably do not know. Did you know that you were one of those birds. Just now what you were doing with your foot, while you played with that ball, that basketball." The old man proceeded to tell her how he got to be on this journey and to explain that she was one of the stork-children he had been sent to find. The old man checked to see if there was any resistance with what she was hearing, but nothing, she was attentive and seemed eager to hear more. When he had finished the tale, the old man added, "I thank you my child. I thank you for listening to a foolish old man, who is not sure himself what he is doing. But if this will help you anywhere throughout your life, I urge you to remember it and to honour these words with who you are and who you might become. May the spirits watch over you and realize their dreams in you." "Thank you old one, my last name is Shiri (bird). I appreciate very much what you have told me," was her reply, and then adding, "May I walk you somewhere?" "No," came the reply, "I am so happy your name is Shiri. Become the dream, bear the name. Again I thank you. I am happy we met." At that, the old man turned to go, eager to find the houselady's daughter. He found her, propped up against the railing outside the community building.

The very next day, early in the morning, the old man had his things packed, ready to leave. By the time the houselady got up, he had long been waiting. All he wanted was the promised pay no matter how much of a pittance it had been. And for that he had to endure the speech of: "The nerve of some people. Here I provide you with a job, hardly doing anything and here you are leaving without even

appreciating my help. Now who is going to look after my daughter for the rest of these school holidays? You know I should have known you were going to do this. I would never have hired you, and to think you still want the money. I can't believe some mother's children, really. Here, take, I hope you find peace with it." The old man endured all this in silence, accepting the money and respectfully bowing in goodbye. That was it, he was out of there. Thank goodness! As it turned out, the additional money, together with what he had left from the early part of his sojourn was just enough to buy the ticket to the capital city west of the eastern highlands. It was the last phase of the journey and the old man could now see the end in sight.

Now here he was, looking for stork number five with no money, one set of clothes, eating food out of discards, washing up in a public toilet, finding wherever to prop up his tired back in the market square to catch some nighttime rest. But there is a vicissitude of spirit that people at the end of their journeys are sometimes able to summon. Wherever this ability to adapt was found, the old man seemed able to call on it. He remained centred, focused. His eyes had taken on a determined strain. Nothing was going to get in his way, this time. No matter how long it took, he would continue eating discards and washing in toilets, sleeping under cardboard boxes. During the day he would walk the streets, wander around grocery stores, determined, looking. He was into his second month now. In a week or so he would be into his third month in this central northern city, the largest in the country. Since he was reduced to walking, he combed the streets all around the market square. Fortunately, the market was centrally located in a fairly large township. It also served as one of the main country going bus-stops for the city, so there was no shortage of people. It was just a question of finding his prize, that one young stork that would complete his nest.

What the old man needed though, was a new pair of shoes. The ones he was wearing had worn through on the bottom, although on the outside they looked

fairly okay. The old man had taken to putting old newspapers into them to cushion his feet from the gravel and tarmac. But the outward illusion of presentable shoes did not last long. Even that had to be abandoned as one of the soles came apart at the seams, hanging like a tattered hopeless dream displacing any notion of the togetherness of things. The old man just let it hang, "To heck with it". However, he could not long ignore it, for with every step, the tattered upper would slap down onto his foot as if to mock his false bravado. He finally picked up some sisal string from the market dump and tied the string around his foot thereby keeping the tattered shoe together. However, the daily ritual of finding sisal and keeping some in his pocket was a constant reminder that he was literally a foot away from defeat and demise.

After a while, the old man changed his routine. It was clear that he was not going to get anywhere just walking on the streets trying to spot what was going on behind the houses and the fences, so he decided he was going to walk among the houses themselves, not just on the streets. This meant walking the alleyways and gaps between the houses. He was right. On the first day he saw a whole lot more people about their daily business than before. Though encouraging, the walk produced nothing. Second day, feeling encouraged, still, nothing came up, but he was resolved. He would keep this up, systematically combing the township's alleyways and houses. Third strike lucky. It happened on the third day after the change in strategy. The children were out of school, a bright early Saturday morning. He had been walking for only two hours. It was a lazy day. He had briefly engaged the conversation of some young women sitting across the way, busy knitting and telling long yarns. They were full of laughter and had asked him to play his fiddle. He had obliged, wanting to share their easy sense of happiness, hoping that maybe it would rub onto him too. After humming the song and playing, he had turned to go, and that's when he spotted them.

It was obvious that they had been eyeing him for much longer than he had

realized. There they were, five young boys, eight, nine, ten years old or thereabouts. It was a strange sequence, there they were, the five of them, standing up inside a fenced yard between the gap through which he was walking. They were arrayed there, as if waiting for an unfolding ceremony. The old man took his time. He knew they were in attendance, and even now he could see him, waiting patiently, the second one in. The old man sensed that they thought him strange, a bum, and he couldn't blame them. That is why they probably hid behind the fence. He approached cautiously. He knew they were mesmerized, so the old man continued to hum his song and pluck his fiddle. This was it, the end of the road. This is where it all ends. The old man could feel the pathos of the signification clouding his thoughts. Then stopping, he looked at the young boy squarely into the eyes pointing decisively as if to memorialize the moment, and then with the most emphatic voice he could summon, he said, "You - who is standing like a stork". Perhaps it was because of the finality with which the old man had said it that the boy shied away. It was as if the old man had caught him unawares, deeply exposing a hidden secret. The young boy slowly put his bare foot down, an inquisitive expression coming over his face trying to accommodate the moment. But the old man did not own up. Any sense of explanation would totally ruin the moment, so the old man continued looking, checking for the feeling of impact from the import of the words. There, he could see it, a bridge of finality crossed, his own, the apparent bewilderment of the wheel-barrow boy, and this one hiding behind the illusion of the protection of a fence.

The journey was done. The old man could sense the weariness of the burden melt and dissipate into the muscles of his body like noonday heat in cold water. His eyes were getting wet from the remembrance of what he had allowed himself to embrace and follow through on. "Is this what it means to honour a word? To keep a promise? Then God on high, the Spirit, be praised, who is the only one who can keep a promise. Hear you tribes of the birds, your children are

called. Now watch over and fulfill your word. Even as I, a mere man, have honoured your words, I charge you, you feathered people, to endure your sorrow or pain in watching and keeping these young ones, called. I charge you this day in the name of the Great Spirit, the Great Creator of all beings, of you and us and all that are living.'” The words were coming from somewhere deep within a hidden well within the old man. He did not speak, but he heard each word as if shouted from a mountain top. It was so loud he was sure his voice was booming into the ears of the bird-people, and even if they tried to take wing and fly away, his words would still chase and outrun them. The certainty of this ending seemed fitting. He allowed the weariness peculiar to a tired human soul to enwomb him. For the first time he could allow himself to feel his own sorrow. He let himself.

The day was still early, but without thinking about it, the old man found himself heading straight back to the market place as if it was home. The incredulity of his situation didn't face him until he spied the small pile of cardboard boxes that had sheltered him for many nights now. Just seeing them was as much as he could bear. He decided to find a place to sit and think. As he propped himself against a tree, he simply hung his head into his arms by his chin. He wasn't thinking anymore, simply allowing whatever feelings coming to him to have their own place and reckoning. He must have been there for an hour or more when he noticed one of the ladies from the market-stands walking towards him. “Old one, are you alright? You know, I have been thinking about it for a while now. I notice that you need some new shoes. Yours are full of holes, I do not know how you keep walking in them. I have been thinking about this for a while. I would like you to come with me into the store to get some canvas shoes. Please come, old one. We will get them together”. The old man looked up, only then did he notice the true and sorry state of his footwear. Both shoes were bound in sisal string now. The newspapers below the soles were a tattered mass of fibrous history. “My child, I thank you. I do not need shoes. I need to get home now. If you will, then use the

money to get me a ticket so I may get back home,” the old man managed to proffer in reply. “Oh, old one I wish I had known. Here, this is the money I had for the shoes, I hope it will get you where you are going. Safe journey old one. Safe journey.” With that, the vegetable vendor turned to get back to her place in the market-stands.

The old man continued sitting there for a while, overwhelmed and simply too wearied by the emotions of the morning, the whole sojourn and the now, all of it coming together like the culmination of a marathon just completed. When he managed to pry himself up, he searched the bus terminal for the bus back to Musha, but he didn't have enough for the fare. The best he could try to manage was to get back to his son's place, and even at that he was still short. He decided to chance it and ask the conductor if he could board the bus up to his son's town even though he only had so much and was short. The conductor carried on with his work as if he had not heard. The old man simply stood there and allowed him to carry on. It was clear that the bus was almost full and about to pull away when the driver sounded the horn. The old man stood his ground close to the door. The conductor was the last one to hop on, as he did so, he motioned to the old man, “Old one, let's go, let's go.” The old man thanked him and got on. The bus was already moving, so the old man quickly found an empty seat and wearily sank his body into it. As he sat there, he knew what a sorry state he was in and what a sorrier sight he looked. The only comfort and vague reminder of his previous self was the fiddle, and even it seemed tired and weary from the long endurance. What would his son and daughter-in-law think? In light of the whole, this merely seemed a frivolous question. What the old man now knew, with some semblance of sureness, was that among all the garbs that human beings cover themselves with, humility was the only garment worth keeping.

Act III

THE QUEST FOR THE SPIRIT-SELF

PROLOGUE

In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God: and the word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by it, and without it, was made nothing that was made. In it was life, and the life was the light of men, and the light shineth in the darkness, but the darkness comprehended it not.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came as a witness to bear witness of the light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that light: but to bear witness of the light. That was a true light, which lighteth all men that come into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him: and yet the world knew him not.

He came among his own and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them he gave power to be the sons of God in that they believed on his name: which were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh, nor yet of the will of man: but of God.

And the word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw the glory of it, as the glory of the only begotten son of the father, which word was full of grace and verity.¹³

Source and Horizons

The most basic and fundamental fact we can state about the nature of reality is that everything comes from One Source. That Source from which all things come, we can call God or simply, The-Source. That which is the most

13. From, *The Gospel of Saint John* ch1vv1-14, *Tyndale's New Testament*, trans. from the Greek by William Tyndale (1534), modern spelling edition by David Daniell (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989).

immediate expression of The-Source is the first thing, the initial reality that The-Source originated. It is that which is the essence of all things, that which is spread out through all reality. It is that which is primary to all reality. We could therefore call it First or Primary Reality, Source-Essence, or following St. John's gospel, we could call it, Logos. Logos, or Source-Essence, therefore represents that which is primal to all things. It suggests itself to be of cosmic extent because it fills everything that is, to be spread throughout the whole Cosmos/Universe. There is no place that anything is that Logos or Source-Essence is not. That is, whatever is, for it to be there, means that the Cosmic Presence of The-Source is there too.

The preceding is a brief abstract of the paradox of the co-inherence of Source and Essence within reality. As expressed by St. John, the first level of the paradox is of the conjoining of identity between Source/God and Source-Essence/Logos. That is, that which sustains and brings everything else about, that very thing is none other than its own Source. In that sense, The-Source is none other than that which brings existence to things out of itself, Source-Essence or Logos. The second level of the paradox concerns light shining in darkness. The question this raises is: If light is shining in darkness, how could there be darkness? One is therefore being forced to think, not of our partial, solitary and confined lights, but of an all-embracing Light, the Light-of-The-Logos, that Light which exists as the potentiality for the existence of everything else. It is this Light which permeates everything else and is in everything else. A further aspect of the paradox is of The-Logos becoming 'flesh', that is, becoming individualized and specified in human form. That is, together with the original or cosmic sense of Logos, there is now the realization of a personalized or individualized Logos, a micro-cosmic Logos. This con-joining of the Macro-Cosmic-Logos to a Micro-Cosmic-Logos, is then related to a sequence of words that seem to point to the same dynamic at various concentric levels: Source/Logos; Logos/Light; Light/Life; Life/Only-Begotten; Only-Begotten/Christ; Christ/Jesus, Amy, Kwame, Janice, Ihab, Tawanda, Elizabeth, Nikiwe, Farai, Brian,

Ismail, Gurinder, Huang, Petros, Melody, Manjit, Jasmine, Eduardo, Hamish, Margaret, Anthony, Inana, Felicia, Keiji, Yula, Richard, Thomas, Mary, Jane, Toni, Alicia, Farai, Shanti, Malcolm, Terri

For some people, the word Christ is of unique identification with Jesus. It is therefore understandable when there is hesitancy about the Macro-Cosmic understanding of Christ, something which should really be referred to as The-Christ, or alternatively, as The-Logos. Notwithstanding, the ideas are co-inherent and should not be considered as different in aspect from one to the other. They are like concentric circles around a point, revolving around the same reality. It is not so much that The-Christ/The-Logos is different from who and what Jesus was, rather that we need to widen our understanding from the concretized manifestation of The-Logos/The-Christ through Jesus. Of central significance, is Jesus' claim, something which ultimately led to his arrest and crucifixion, that He and The-Father (God/Source) were One. From that basis, Jesus sought to be One with Others, so that as He and The-Father are One, He and The-Others are One, All-They-Together are One. This, in principle, was His message. This then becomes the full expression of The-Source within the All, the conjoining of individualized biophysical identities with the ab-original Source-Essence.

St. John's prologue also proffers that the Light of Creation came to the World and that all who received its coming were given power to become children of God and that these ones were the ones born, not of biology, etcetera, but of God. The writer does not appear to be saying that they believed and then became born, but rather that they believed and were given power to *become*, and that these same ones had already been born of the will of God beyond or prior to the birth of a biological nature. The question then becomes, how could they have been born of God before they had been born physically (flesh, blood, will of man)? There seems therefore to be a pointing towards an original or primordial birth, a birth from God. The coming of the Light of Creation into the World and of its embrace by these, is

therefore in essence, a re-cognition of their own Sourcing, of their own begetting from God, before their births as biophysical entities. From this, the becoming of the children of God is therefore a taking up of that which they already were. When this original identity is embraced, something very significant takes place. It means that from the initial reverberations of The-Logos' issue from The-Source and of its existence within the continual outgoing of Light/Life, somehow in this whole process, an instance has been reached where The-Logos/The-Christ has realized self-awareness in the form of a specific biophysical entity. It represents a finalization, an end but also a beginning, of the outgoing of The-Logos into Creation. The significance of this is like a zero-point, a crux or resting point of a pendulum's swing. The-Source's-Essence or Logos, having realized identity within physicality, now turns back to The-Source/The-Father in an expansive return that adds a new dimension to The-Source's self-awareness and realization. This becomes not just a simple return of substance, but rather a creative exodus that incorporates a new genesis.

Love and Unity

What the creative exodus initiates is a growing realization that The-Christ/The-Logos is something which transcends all boundaries. It becomes the manifesting of life which has as its basis the recognition that The-Source is the source of one's being. This essentially translates into living with Love as the founding principle of Life and Creation and of the outworking of the Universe, and centrally for us, The-Earth. The Cosmic manifestation of The-Christ/The-Logos is therefore something that has to be concretized and individualized in a specific human life, which can only mean, in one's own life. Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, this is not something that happens accidentally, while one is off doing something else. There is a cultivation involved, an active process of growth

required. It involves accepting and embracing one's own inner nature as a Spirit-Child-of-God, who in turn is one's own true self, an individualized aspect of The-Christ/The-Logos. To be a Christ-ian then, and this is not in any religious sense, means to manifest The-Christ/The-Logos, to realize the essence of one's nature as a Child-of-God. Unfortunately, much of what is apprehended as Christianity suggests that there is very much a partial apprehension of this idea, probably even a resistance to the thoroughgoing reception of The-Christ/The-Logos which would represent an embrace of origins of the truest identity. There is a great fear of the loss of identity so that rather than The-Christ coming to be the centre of one's identity, we 'invite' Christ into what we see as *our* life, using statements like 'come into my heart', 'come into my life'. This is far from accurate, for The-Christ is really the ab-original and primary aspect of one's being. The demanding part of the process is that The-Christ/The-Logos does not come to be *part* of my life, but is rather *the* very life.

When the centrality of The-Christ/The-Logos, the individualized Spirit-Child-of-God, is acknowledged within the individual, this initiates a process of integration, because all through one's life The-Christ/The-Logos and the Spirit-Child-of-God had largely been masked over. One may call this integration, 'Walking with Christ' or 'Living in the Spirit', but it is the individuated aspect of that, one's own Spirit-Self, that one is in the process of uncovering and becoming. In basic, the goal is to have the Spirit-Self as the central identity of one's life so that one is in the process of becoming a Christ-Being; that is, not so much a Christian, but rather a biophysical/spirit being whose intent, desire and life is the manifestation of The-Christ, Source-Essence, Logos/Light. No matter how grandiose this may sound, this is what becoming a Christ-ian means. One must not look at it in the sense of an escape away from the physical/material reality over into some other separate non-tangible spiritual reality. What this points towards is the spiritualization of material reality through which The-Christ/The-Logos fully

awakens in all manifest realms and realities that have emanated from The-Source. This seems to be what we are being drawn towards. It is a reality that The-Earth is already in the process of emanating and manifesting. The goal for us is to become biophysical/spiritual beings. What we have as basis for this, is reception of The-Christ/The-Logos, individuated into one's own Spirit-Self. This begins a process of the regeneration of one's identity as the Spirit-Self begins to permeate various aspects of one's life, bringing those aspects into alignment with the realization of who one is as a Child-of-God. Such realization would represent the removal of various layers of one's unknowing, that is, ignorance and blindness, the disability to realize that the source of one's being is The-Christ/The-Logos.

Figuratively, we may speak of this process as the cessation of antagonism between intuitive thinking (knowing) and logical thinking (reasoning). This lack of conflict is what the process would work towards, that place where the life-flow and life-direction of the biophysical/spirit being becomes intuitively fused with and sourced from God/The-Source. This would also mean a lack of antagonism between the will of God/The-Source, the will of The-Christ/The-Logos, and the will of the individual (the Spirit-Self). There is then the partaking of a Singular-Spirit-Reality, which as various individuals begin to be in touch with, they also begin to be in touch with one another, so that in some sense, it all becomes one complex, thus ceasing the illusion of our separation from The-Source, from each other and from Creation. This then becomes the actualization of the unity of all things.

As individuals begin to partake of this sense, love begins to be the only basis for existence. The result will be the realization that there is no 'mine' against 'yours', but rather that it is 'us' who draw life from The-Source. As we begin to realize our place and context within The-Source, we also begin to realize our place and context in relation to one another as beings that are interrelated and interwoven into one Web-of-Life, intricately and patently fused with the life of

The-Christ/The-Logos, the fabric of the interrelatedness of all things, and so manifesting the desire, purpose and love of The-Source.

Dispersion and Return

It is useful here to re-trace our cosmo-spiritual steps, beginning with the process of forgetting and awakening, because that is where it all begins and ends. From the very beginning, when the spiritual extensions of the Creative-Aspect-of-God (Logos), began participating in the creative process, it was known within The-Source that this process of extension into the created realm could bring about a forgetting of who and what and from whom they were sourced. In other words, the deceleration of the pure light of The-Source to the material realms of creation had the potential of the building of a 'veil' of forgetting between The-Source and the Children-of-God. The consequence of such forgetting is what has come to be called 'The Fall'.

Since this potentiality of the creative excursion was known within The-Source, a provision was made ensuring that such creative participation would not be something that would result in an ultimate fissure between God (Prime Source) and God's Children (Logos/Creation). Thus, within the entity of every person who experiences and participates in material reality, there is always a way back, a hidden fulcrum upon which the whole process can turn. Even in the most endemic forgetting, the way back to awareness is always there, a re-membling of that which the Children-of-God truly are: Logos/Light. This intrinsic nature is also determined to be the very manner by which the Children overcome their Forgetting or Darkness. This way, there is thereby a return of the outgoing Word-of-God, The-Logos, back to its Source. What this means is that within every individual, there is already The-Christ/The-Logos. The primordial secret is that The-Christ is already within. If this were not the case, there would be no manner

in which anyone who has extended from The-Source and separated from the sense of Unitive Oneness with The-Source could ever recover and recoup that sense of Oneness.

The outworking of the divine mystery is therefore not so much an infusion of The-Christ into one, as much as it is the awakening of that Christ who is already within oneself, which as expressed by St. Paul, is: *Christ in you, the hope of glory*¹⁴. No matter how many extensions into physical reality there may be, the suggestive idea is that the process of redemption somehow involves The-Logos/The-Christ. In this sense, 'Christ in you, the hope of glory' is not really a religious statement, but rather a structural map of the cosmo-genesis. This map is much larger than any one parochial religious demarcation can accommodate since it extends to the furthest reaches of The-Source's Creative Generation.

The expansive cosmo-genesis of dispersion and return is therefore an inherent function of The-Logos/The-Christ. In process, it may be compared to the launching of a program within which is imbedded a hidden code, which when the program has arrived at its terminus, re-engages through this hidden code, a process of redemption or the gathering of results. The hidden code in this case is The-Christ/The-Logos, The-Source's Primordial Essence. It is this code which exists within every individual no matter where or when that individual exists. This code is identifier of both origins and final destination. There is therefore a macro-cosmic or universal sense to the process of cosmo-genesis as well as a micro-cosmic or personal sense. From the personal sense, it is the realization within oneself of the full potential of that which one is, that which God/The-Source has hidden within, namely, The-Christ/The-Logos. The goal is the cultivation and awakening of this Spirit-Child-of-God who is hidden within so that it may begin to be realized as one's being. This essentially means realizing and becoming that individuated aspect of The-Christ/The-Logos which one is. Being a Christ-ian, from that sense, is a

14. See, *The Epistle of Paul to the Colossians*, ch1v27.

gradual and continual outworking of this realization. From the universal perspective, one could see it as involving, not only groups of individuals, but also planetary spheres such as the Earth, solar systems such as that of our Sun, galactic spheres, for example, that of the Milky Way, and so forth. This process of cosmogenesis, the outgoing and return of The-Logos to The-Source, is therefore something that takes place at many levels. The synthesis of the realization of this process is the harmonious articulation of unitive-oneness at each of these multiple levels. In the ultimate sense, it becomes none other than the Cosmic Awakening of The-Body-of-The-Christ.

Diversity and Uniqueness

In one's search for the Spirit-Self, one is searching for and seeking to grow into the full realization of who one is within The-Body-of-The-Christ. That is, since within oneself there is a micro-cosmic aspect of The-Christ, a Spirit-Child-of-God, one's purpose is to grow to the full measure of that micro-cosmic aspect thus realizing one's place within the macro-cosmic Body-of-The-Christ. These are parallel journeys occurring at the same time. It helps to always have both in view. Having this view is what guards one from the frustration of endless comparisons between oneself and others. It also removes the impelling need for conformity, the suggestion that somehow one's path must conform to what happened to this teacher and that teacher or this saint and that saint. What is essential is to keep view of the Body-of-The-Christ and the sense of how one is a unique aspect of that. That is, it is the realizing of that which The-Source gave one to be and wanting to reach the fullness of that, and what that is, is one's truest self, the Spirit-Self. One's Spirit-Self is therefore uniquely identifiable, and when one realizes it, one intrinsically knows that one is attaining that which God created one to be.

With these things in view, what needs to be emphasized is the need to embrace both diversity *and* unity. Unfortunately, this has been a very difficult truth to realize, outwork and fully manifest. The tendency, repeated over and over, has been to disallow parts of the Body-of-The-Christ to affirm and conform themselves to that which they are within that Body. Rather than celebrating the other's uniqueness, the general trend has been to seek to eradicate such diverse uniqueness. In the teachings of The-Christ upon Earth, there has not been a wide assimilation of diversity, a celebration of diverse expressions as a basis through which we enhance the Body-of-The-Christ. There may not be need to repeat this, but the Body-of-The-Christ needs to always be seen in the grander sense of the whole matrix of The-Source's Creative Genus. From that sense, the Body-of-The-Christ is also much grander and larger than the confines of the Earth. However, there is focus provided in looking at it primarily within the purview of our context here on Earth and trying to realize the fullness of *that* body of The-Christ. It is challenging enough and difficult enough to do just that. Still, one should not forget that this would only be to provide a terrestrial focus to our thinking. Even with all the expression and beauty that life on Earth may represent, to overlook the expansive nature of the Body-of-The-Christ would be like putting God in the proverbial ball. The-Source is much grander than that, and so is the manifested reality of The-Source's Creativity.

Even as we have in view the many parts of the Body-of-The-Christ, we also need to have in view the understanding that The-Earth itself is a part of the Body-of-The-Christ. It may be, that we here on Earth are going through a process of the Cosmic Manifestation of The-Christ *upon* Earth. The understanding would be that as we each individually express the Spirit-Self, the full measure of the Spirit-Child-of-God within us, it would then follow that this part of the Cosmic Body of The-Christ, Earth, would begin to manifest the Christ-Presence throughout its terrasphere. The veil that separates us from the awareness of this participation within

The-Logos/The-Christ, is the veil of forgetting. The goal is for us to traverse this unawareness, and through that, break forth and begin to see that which is reality and truth all around us. But in order to be able to do that, we first need to be able to embrace and celebrate diversity.

The embrace and celebration of diversity begins with oneself. One begins by embracing the uniqueness which one represents. As one searches for one's Spirit-Self, one must continue the search in a manner that conforms to the way that God has created one, the context in which one finds oneself, the accents of where one lives and has lived and the various cultural expressions those places represent. One does not relegate these creative accents to the dust heap, because in doing so, one may actually be depriving The-Christ/The-Logos of its diversity and beauty. One should therefore express the uniqueness of one's own search without fear. It is when we have begun to see and celebrate our diversity and unity with the created realm that we will realize the truth of who and what we are as Children-of-God *and* Earth. As the light of that truth begins to shine within us and around us, we will also begin to see what each one of us are without needing to feel any less or more important in our particular expression of The-Christ/The-Logos.

Prayer is a key aspect in the search for the Spirit-Self. It means asking The-Father who is The-Source, to bring about the expression of who He/She has envisioned one to be so that one may conform one's search towards that, cultivating a single eye for the attainment of that. This way, one will no longer be distracted by another's individual expression of The-Christ, no matter how much grander or less grander it may *appear* to be. One therefore searches because one already has a sense of that which one is searching for. The greatest lesson that one will need to learn is that ultimately, there is nowhere else to realize the truth of oneself other than through oneself. This lesson has been emphasized again and again by many spiritual sojourners, namely, that all one can find and needs to find, is already contained within oneself. This is simply another ageless reminder that

the seed of The-Source, The-Christ/The-Logos, is already within oneself. Just as the seed of a tree already 'knows' what kind of tree it is, the inner seed within oneself already 'knows' the Christ-Expression which one is within The-Source. This means that as one turns to The-Source/The-Father, one also turns inward to The-Christ/The-Logos, expressing the desire for this seed to grow and become that which The-Father/The-Source has begotten it to be.

Figuratively, one may see this as the uncovering of the unique locale of one's Spirit-Self within the Body-of-The-Christ so that the function of the 'cells' around that particular locale are in harmony with one's own. That is, one senses oneself to be in the right place. Even though one may search far and wide, such searching allows for fluidity of change until one finds one's true place. From that sense, one should not fear change, since change is part and parcel of the process of growth. But in that change, one should not judge based on diversity or differences, either one's own or another's mode of expression. Even among those that one may look at as teachers, there should not be a feeling that by expressing one's own unique identity, one is thereby betraying those that have guided one's search. There should not be a feeling of anything being lost, but rather a feeling of joy that that aspect of the Body-of-The-Christ which is oneself is coming into fullness and that this is something to celebrate.

There is a need here to speak briefly of a difficult hurdle that may come up for some in their search for the Spirit-Self. Such individuals may be likened to blood cells within the Body-of-The-Christ. That is, they may not be so much identified with a specific part of the Body-of-The-Christ but are that aspect of the Body which travels throughout it bringing life to the other parts. In a sense, these are what may be called spiritual sojourners or travelers. Anyone who has traveled extensively through different cultures and contexts realizes that one requires an easy acceptance of culturally diverse expressions of life. Of primary importance in the spiritual sojourner's attitude are beliefs. Our beliefs not only carry us, they

define and confine us to that which we believe, so that to come to an acceptance and understanding of diverse peoples and still have a healthy and wholesome sense of individual identity, is perhaps one of the most difficult qualities for a sojourner to sustain. There is something of a beauty achieved when this quality is gained, a maturity of realization that different peoples in different places have varied and legitimate cultural expressions of the way to live life and that these are simply a reflection of the environment within which people have found themselves and of their unique comportment to it. As a sojourner, it may be that what one has long-held to be key beliefs may need to be adjusted in their purview due to the nature of one's spiritual sojourning through various contexts. If the expression of one's search turns out to be that of a sojourner, the suggestion from this is to remain fluid and pliable as one continues to express the Spirit-Self that God/The-Source has given one to be.

Consciousness and Awakening

Conventional logical thinking would suggest that the consciousness displayed by human beings was simply attained through a progressive unfolding. The other view, in light of the expansive sense of the All, is that it was not as a result of a gradual progression as much as it was a *given*. That is, the self-awareness or consciousness of human beings is something that is from Origins, from The-Source, something occasioned by the Children-of-God as they began to venture into the physical dimensions of reality exploring the sensations of separation and forgetting. That is, they began to explore self-contained senses of awareness and in that way became self-conscious rather than maintaining the sense of unitive-oneness with the Consciousness of The-Source. In this sense, the resultant consciousness was not so much a jump of consciousness as much as it was a fragmentation of consciousness. From another angle, we could actually say that

there hasn't been so much an evolution of human consciousness as much as there has been a devolution of consciousness, which as a result, is in the process of being recouped.

We are only speaking of consciousness here and not evolution, because there is no denying that there has been a physical adaptation (evolution) of the human race to the physical environment. This should however be seen as something that originated from a place where there had already been a fragmentation of consciousness, and then a gradual recovery of that consciousness. The initial fragmentation of consciousness has already been noted to be that which is identified as 'The Fall'. The jumps in the growth of human awareness have therefore not occurred in a linear manner but are more like a boomerang in trajectory, tracing both the loss and recovery of consciousness.

Self-consciousness is something that has been a source of much contention within the human race. While facilitating the uniqueness of individual identity, it has however occasioned selfishness, thus giving rise to competition in both its negative and positive forms. So while this form of awareness has facilitated the tempering of various elements of the physical reality, it has also occasioned some great social ills. There seems to have been a parallel development between the growth of self-awareness and the increasing ability of the human race to temper the physical environment. But along with that, there has also been the occasioning of the thoughts of 'I against You', 'Us against Them'. In some sense then, it has been a two edged sword. Generally speaking, the history and development of human civilization has followed these parallel paths. Where there has been positive advancement of a sort, whether technological, industrial, artistic, those same capabilities have also had the potential of being used in negative ways. This negative dimension essentially emanates from selfishness, the inability of one's awareness to take in more and more of the other's point of view.

Figuratively speaking, awareness is like the sea of water that the fish lives

in. It is not as if it is *something* as such, but is rather the very reality which allows one to be. In that sense, it has much more to do with one's perception of reality than that it has to do with consciousness itself, simply because Consciousness Is. That is, consciousness is all of a sense, God's Consciousness. Our consciousness is therefore only a participation in God's Consciousness. Our awakening is a growth into more and more of The-Source's/God's own Consciousness. This is why there should be hesitancy in using the word consciousness because it implies that it is something that can be partial, when it is actually something that is always whole and always one. The word *realization* is of more precision because it says that there is something here that is already whole and full, *consciousness*, which one can come into a growing and participative realization of. What we are trying to do in our own evolvment is therefore to awaken into more and more of a realization of The-Source's Consciousness. It is a gradual realization of the truth of reality. With that realization comes a change in perception and this change in perception allows for a transformation of ways of thinking and living.

Roughly speaking, if one takes a look at physical reality, one can see that the physical expression of an organism parallels the level of internal awareness it expresses. Whether the awareness is an inert awareness, external awareness, or self-awareness, there is a gradual paralleling of the physical vehicle or type of organism that has each of these forms of awareness. These two aspects of reality, the form of awareness and the form of physical expression, seem to go together. So there isn't only the development and accommodation of a form of awareness without the parallel development of a form of physical organism that is able to contain or utilize that kind of awareness. Therefore, the awakening of consciousness also involves at some level, the parallel manifestation of a physical form of expression representative of the attendant form of consciousness. That is, the new awareness brings with it some kind of change within the organism in order to enable the organism to contain, work and live with the new or enlarged

sense of awareness. There are two possibilities. The change may largely be internal with no noticeable change in the external form of the receptacle organism, or it may involve the arising of an new form of organism capable of carrying the new awareness. It is this latter sense which is the real basis for a true evolution.

The culmination of the search for one's Spirit-Self could be called many things. We could call it Oneness; Love; Consciousness; Realization; Awakening; any of a number of terms. Notwithstanding what we call it, it involves a form of transcendence from creature consciousness to a co-creative or participative consciousness. That is, it is an awakening to the creative impetus that we have received from The-Source. In some sense, it is a transformation of human awareness into Source Awareness. One should not misunderstand this, because it will not be that one is becoming The-Source, but rather that when one has awoken to Oneness, in that sense, one has begun to realize and manifest The-Source. It involves an open but not a complete transcendence. In culmination, the growth of awareness would involve becoming a point of extension of The-Source's creative impetus into one's environment. This process is something that emanates from The-Source's Ground-of-Love. Within that covering of the Spirit-of-Love, our co-creative capacities will not be anymore different than the self-awareness that we presently live with in our contemporary ability to work with physical reality to, for example, plane wood, make tables and chairs. We do not usually think of these contemporary abilities as the working of and with consciousness because we are simply seeing ourselves as utilizing certain known guidelines, for example, of knowing the properties of wood and of how it responds to the application of certain tools and procedures. We have become adept at working together with, in a sense, the inherent consciousness within the wood. Acknowledging and respecting the internal properties of the consciousness of wood, is therefore akin to the attitude of Love that will be required in our co-creativity with The-Source. It will be like the realization of and the respecting of the aliveness of all things with the

Consciousness of God/The-Source.

One could also see the culmination of the search as an awakening to the Consciousness of God, although in another sense it is actually God's Consciousness that awakens in us. That is, we gradually realize our unitive oneness with the Light-of-God that is the cause of reality and is spread throughout God's manifest reality, what we have called The-Christ/The-Logos. Such awakening is really a re-awakening, a recovery of something that has always been there but was largely overshadowed, forgotten, lost. We awaken to it as we grow into our measure of The-Christ-Within. It is this growth which also triggers the process of our transformation into becoming biophysical expressions of The-Source's Consciousness. This transformation *can* take place individually but it can only be fully realized when The-Earth itself/herself has attained a sufficient measure of Christ-Consciousness to trigger a Whole-Earth transformation into an expression of the Consciousness of Love. That is, we only enter into the fullness of our reality as the Children-of-God *and* Earth, when there is a joining together of our Christed Consciousness to the Essence of The-Source's Consciousness, which is Love.

Purification and Asceticism

The power of the creativity of Spirit derives from God/The-Source, because then the Spirit-Self realizes that it is conjoined with God and sources its life and power from Him/Her/It. This power is of purity and exists in purity, affirming the understanding that God/The-Source is Light. This is an assurance. However, it also means that whoever begins to search for their Spirit-Self, of necessity, goes through a process of purification and trial. It is not trial designed to destroy but rather to purify, so that the person who realizes the sense of union with the Spirit-Self and thereby becomes aware of the processes that govern reality, is a person who has been tried and tested, or rather has been cleansed of impurities so that as they

begin to participate in the processes of co-creativity, Love becomes the only motivation for such co-creativity. All of those that have come to attain the awareness of oneness have gone through this process. As one searches for one's Spirit-Self, one will have to go through the same process. It is best to recognize it for what it is as it begins to happen so that one does not become dissuaded or discouraged but rather sees it as a necessary part of the process of attaining to the realization of the presence of God/The-Source in one's life.

In a sense, the search for the Spirit-Self is a process of learning and growth, something akin to a School of Love. It is a school of learning to live in a manner that affirms the unitive-oneness of things. When one begins to grow into this realization, one begins to allow the awareness of one's essential oneness with everything else to guide one's interaction with others and with the created realm. This would include interaction with those that might not have a similar sense of the unity of things. That is, one begins to express the Ground of Love without discrimination. The onus is on the one who is on the spiritual path to begin to realize this and to live it out in whatever context of existence they find themselves in. All of this points one to the need for maturing and for attaining to the full measure of the maturity of The-Christ-Within. That is the goal. All things dovetail. One is able to endure the process of purification by realizing what the goal is. Maturity in those that are entering into the Freedom-of-Spirit is essential so that when they have gained that freedom, they use it in a manner that enhances Life and affirms the Creation.

The process of purification and maturation should therefore be viewed in a positive manner. It is simply an indication of one's growth so that one's participation always has this in the background, The-Christ/The-Logos, that which is within all, the power by which The-Source upholds and sustains reality. When one realizes the energy and power of its presence, there should not be found within oneself the desire to use this power for purposes other than as an expression of the

Oneness-of-All within The-Source. The potential is always there, even among those that have begun to attain, so vigilance is called for. This also means that when other lessons are being faced, it may be an indication that the individual is going through another level of growth and purification. This may represent a deeper lesson that needs to be learnt or perhaps a lesson that had not been adequately apprehended in its first instance. In this way, there is opportunity for both growth and retraction, a deepening spiral, as the person grows in their understanding and also in their ability to exist/live in a manner that honours Life, Love, and the Creation of God.

A corollary part of the process of purification and maturation is the ascetic life. Generally, it represents an innate transformation of life style so that there is a directed or focused life commitment from the individual who is on the spiritual quest. It is a kind of commitment which changes one's life, not simply for the purposes of attaining something, but rather as a way of facilitating an actual change in the way of being, something embraced for the rest of one's life. If this is to rise early everyday in meditation and prayer, then the person becomes that kind of person. In this sense, it is not simply a question of becoming self-disciplined or self-controlled because asceticism is not for the purposes of attaining something. That is, there is nothing to attain because one is simply living life, albeit in a manner that may be different from a previous manner. Once one has entered into the new life, it is now one's life and there is no other life to go back to. The changes must therefore be seen as part and parcel of life and living.

The search for the Spirit-Self also involves and requires at some level, a cultivated sense of focus. A helpful way to engender focus is to write down one's commitments because it takes them out of invisibility and places them into the visible physical realm. This gives power to the Essential Creativity of the Universe to begin to align things in one's life in a manner that begins to help one along in one's goal. There is no need here to speak of various other practices and techniques

that may be helpful. Each individual on the quest for the Spirit-Self will have to tailor their own life in a manner that allows a sense of urgency to that which they have a goal towards. Whatever that is, what is being said here is that there will be a need to accentuate and cultivate those attitudes geared towards the spiritual realization of what is being sought.

What also needs to be said along with this, is that one needs to be careful about the extent and forcefulness with which one begins to transform one's life. There is no need to be violent with oneself or with the body. The awakening of awareness is not for the rejection of the body. It is geared rather, towards the re-genesis of the physical realm into becoming a spiritual/physical realm where the Spiritual and the Physical are conjoined as to become in some sense, a spirit-matter reality. One therefore needs to show and maintain love for the physical body. In the past, there has been a misplaced understanding of what people have thought of as the ascetic life. The higher the degree to which one buffeted one's body, to that degree was one thought to display awareness. The basic error of this kind of thinking needs to be corrected. The body is not dirty or evil, it is not a hindrance. It is rather a helper, a vessel through which the creative aspect of God enters into a new dimension, a new level of being and an adeptness at using the physical realm for the creative purposes of The-Spirit, The-Christ, The-Source.

Having a way of cultivating and sensing the spiritual is central and crucial in this whole process, because as one goes through life, one will encounter different environments, situations, constructs, through which one will have to discern the spiritual. This is something that cannot be communicated to another as such, but once one has begun to realize it, one begins to recognize it in different aspects of physical reality, whether in poetry, art, music, architecture, and various other media. Gradually, this becomes one's own personal sense of the spiritual, whether it is in the way one dresses, or perhaps in the way that one speaks, prepares food, the way one eats, etc. There is much that can be expressed, but whatever it is, one

needs to develop it for oneself in order to allow it to be an expression of one's realization of the Spirit-Self. It becomes an expression of the giving of thanks to The-Source, Father-Mother-God, for the beauty of their creativity.

Experience and Co-Creation

Something that happens as a person begins to search for and recognize their Spirit-Self is that aspects of this search begin to be experienced in one's life. Experience is therefore part and parcel of the process of growth and must not be viewed negatively or as something which must not be cultivated. The experience of the physical presence of the Spirit-Self is to be expected, because part of the process of this growth is the integration of one's physical sense of reality with one's spiritual sense of reality. The bringing of these two together will bring about a continued, gradual and sensed enmeshing of what appear to be two realities but are really of one. The problem is that our physical lives have been very much defined and driven by the physical aspects of reality. To recognize a sense of reality derived from the spiritual requires a change in thinking and a recognition that reality is of one, extending from the invisible to the visible. By seeking the Spirit-Self, one is tapping into the greater reality and seeking to bring it into the physical realm in a conscious manner, beginning with the understanding that one is conjoined to one's own Spirit-Self, and that that Spirit-Self is sourced from The-Source and is one with The-Christ, that is, is an aspect of the Cosmic Logos.

One should understand then, that the quest for and the growth into The-Christ/The-Logos will indeed affect and impact one's life in some tangible manner. These tangible impacts must be viewed as a process of growth rather than as something attained. This way, they will not become a resting place, or a place where one begins to think that they have attained something and should therefore stop seeking. Experience is only a recognition that the Spirit-Self is affirming one's

growth and development into becoming an expression of The-Christ/The-Logos. Such experience is not for the purposes of self-aggrandizement or for facilitating a basis upon which one separates from others to give an indication that one is more advanced or that others are more advanced than one is. That is, experiences are only instances of The-Spirit's breaking through into one's awareness so that there is a recognition that the spiritual ground of reality is real and that it is interacting with and manifesting in one's life in order for there to be a healthy process of growth.

What needs to be remembered is that what is being formed in the search and embrace of the Spirit-Self is in effect, a 'new creation'. This creation of a new being may involve the freedom to do certain things that appear to be out of the ordinary, but things that are actually ordinary to the genus of the 'new creation' being formed. A baby, for example, is born and gradually begins to walk and talk, read and write, ride a bicycle, etc. If all people in the world were babies, those who first begin to be able to do these things, talking, walking and so forth, would be considered extraordinary. And yet the truth would only be that all of it is simply part and parcel of a normal process of growth. These activities would not be anything unusual, although initially they may be considered so. Similarly, when a person begins to integrate with their own individualized aspect of The-Christ/The-Logos, their Spirit-Self, because of a lack of prevalence, it may appear as if something grand is beginning to happen to oneself. The truth of course, is that it is only standing out because that genus of spiritual *be-ing* is only in its early stages of incidence so that there is not as widespread an awareness of what the capabilities of this genus of being are. However, once The-Earth and the Earth-Body-of-The-Christ become manifested (ascension and descension), then it will be seen and known exactly what kind of interactive spirit/matter persons have been generated. All of the abilities attached to them become normal because they would then become part of a normal basis for life, just like walking, talking, writing, reading,

cycling, things that are very normal to us and which we hardly ever have to think about anymore.

There should therefore be an expectation that as one seeks and continues to grow into the Spirit-Self, one will begin to experience and encounter certain things that are from that genus of be-ing. This calls for an openness and a receptivity to The-Spirit's presence. It is therefore not something for intellectual assent alone or something that is, quote/unquote *spiritual*, but is rather of an actual impress of the spiritual upon the physical. That is, it is not simply Heaven by and by, in the sense of a non-physical reality, but rather a New Heaven and a New Earth, representing a physical reality in which Spirit and Matter are in harmonious unity and activity. The-Spirit is the creative agent, and Matter the reception of such agency. As one begins to realize more and more of the Spirit-Self, one also begins to grow into the expression of being a co-creator with The-Spirit. Initially, one can only take baby steps, but baby steps are important. They are the foundational basis upon which one actually begins to walk. Whatever experiences one may come across must be viewed in that sense, as building blocks.

There is no need to specify here what kind of experiences one may come across because to do that would be to set up an expectation that they must come in that order or in that form. They will not necessarily come in any specific order because the Spirit-Self, under the guidance of The-Christ/The-Logos, is the one who knows the intimacy of the individual simply because the Spirit-Self is really one's own Child-of-God-Self who knows one better than anyone else. Therefore the Spirit-Self will create situations and contexts that are in keeping with its own identity, individuality and specific process of growth. So to name experiences here would be redundant. What needs to be developed is an awareness of its presence and a cultivation of that awareness. As one begins to pray, meditate and structure one's life around a cultivated search for the Spirit-Self, there should also be a growing awareness of the impress of the awakening of The-Christ-Within. All of

this will bring about a gradual process of change, both within and around one, and of a deepening sense of interrelationship with The-Source, an awareness of The-Source's presence in and around all things.

Together with the individual expectation of realizing the Spirit-Self, one's vision should be broadened to see where all this is heading. The hope and desire is that humanity will be transformed into a Community-of-Love through the ascendance of a Spirit-of-Oneness. The final expectation is that this process is not something which is going to terminate only at the individual level. That is, as one begins to grow into this, there will be a sense, a feeling, that one is also in some sense, transforming one's living environment either through interaction with others or through interaction with the created realm. The expectation of the new life is that whatever affirming experiences one encounters in one's growth, these are ultimately not private, but are rather harbingers of what is to come, promises of the hope of the New Earth. So the desire to become one's Spirit-Self is not a solitary goal, but is rather an expression of hope for the Whole-Earth.

As one searches and continues the exploration, even though one may be doing it in the privacy of one's room or around people that are not aware of all of this going on, one should have an awareness of being involved in whatever small way, in a global process of the embrace and enveloping of The-Earth by The-Christ/The-Logos ultimately leading to its transformation into an abode of Love. This would be the awakening of The-Christ-Child-of-Earth and of the realization by the people of Earth of a conscious participation in The-Source's-Life. When people begin to live according to the movements of the flow of The-Source's-Life, they also begin to live in harmony with Him/Her/It, and therefore lack nothing. As these things begin to be realized, it will change the way that humanity lives, works and interacts with reality. It is only from this newness of understanding that destructive technologies will be done away with, because it will be known and seen that they are not necessary and that there can be a participative, biologic

technology derived from the harmonious processes of Earth-Life, which in turn are derived from The-Source.

Intimacy and Expression

The search for the Spirit-Self is a search for one's own specified source of being. It is that which gives expression to one's body, one's being and one's physical reality. It continues to do this with a hope that there is going to be a growth and a process of awareness and awakening within the individual, that which is given form, towards that which emanates life. As the individual begins to be awakened to the idea of the presence of that which one is sourced from, this feeling also initiates the beginning of a search. It becomes, in a sense, the appearance of an inner voice letting one know there is more to be sought. This can be seen for example, in a case where one is faced with difficulties and exclaims, 'I have had enough of this'. At that moment, the possibility of another question exists: 'Who is it who has had enough?' This kind of questioning can bring about a growing realization that converse can be made with one's own intrinsic self. These are the beginnings of the search for the Spirit-Self, that Self who is derived from The-Source. It is that which we have called the Child-of-God-Within, that is, one's own individuated aspect of The-Christ/The-Logos. This is that one who is continually enticing and drawing the individual through the confinements and constructs of the physical dimensions of life - matter, space, time and energy. Such limitations are part and parcel of existence on a physical plane, while the search for the Spirit-Self is something which takes place both within and beyond those confinements. The Spirit-Self is very proximate in that sense, so that there is no need to go to great lengths in order to unmask its presence.

The primary mode for the awakening of the Spirit-Self is the cultivation of intimacy, a growing awareness of union with one's source of being. This is

something cultivated through conversation. One begins conversation through an expressed desire to know the other. Therefore in the search for one's Spirit-Self, the inner Child-of-God needs to be addressed. Through this process of address, one expresses a desire to want to become one's true self, that is, to become who and what God/The-Source has given one to be. The seeds of such gifting are already within oneself and therefore only need to be watered and cultivated in order to grow. This cultivation of intimacy is a gradual entry into one's life of an awareness of the nature of one's own Spirit-Self, that measure of the fullness of The-Christ-Within. It also means the allowing of this wise intrinsic self who is sourced from and is in communion with The-Source/The-Father and knows Light and Love, to begin to be present through all of the different aspects of one's life and to begin to take more and more of a directive role in that.

Something of importance to be said about the Spirit-Self is that it is not something that will assert itself, that is, in the sense of taking over control of one's life. There is therefore a need for creating and cultivating a space and ground through which the Spirit-Self can express. The extent to which one is willing to open up and allow the intrinsic Spirit-Self to begin to manifest and to live out the life that God/The-Source has created for this Spirit-Self, then to that extent is one in unison with that ideal or divine will of God/The-Source. By this awakening of The-Christ/The-Logos within, there is thereby, a growing awareness of union with The-Source. As there is this alignment with The-Source, there is also a growing realization that the only thing of import is to be that which The-Father/The-Source has given one to be, that which one has been bequeathed to be. This growing sense of divine will, or divine purpose within one, is derived from the extent to which the Spirit-Self begins to permeate various aspects of one's life.

In the cultivation of intimacy with one's Spirit-Self, what needs to be remembered is that one can speak to one's Spirit-Self. That is, one can audibly express one's hopes and desires for the manifestation of The-Christ-Child-Within

so that it may be expressed in one's life, bringing that life under greater and greater Light of the presence of The-Source/The-Father. Through this, there is then a growing alignment with who one is supposed to be, or rather, with who one truly is. Similarly, this converse or prayer, is also an address to The-Christ, in the sense that one is a part of the Body-of-The-Christ. It is in that sense, an expressed desire to fulfill that which one is within the Body. There is, in this address, a recognition of the cosmic nature of The-Christ/The-Logos. There is also, in that address, a recognition of one's own intrinsic self or Spirit-Self, as an image, a micro-cosmic representation of The-Christ/The-Logos. All of these expressions are simultaneous.

In the search for the intimacy of the Spirit-Self, one is therefore traversing various dimensions of the one search. The greatest call is the call to The-Source/The-Father, an expression of the desire to want to be one with Him/Her/It. There is then a desire to express this sense of unitive-oneness within one's own life and through this, express oneness with others. Another level of intimacy, more focused, is an intimacy with one's own individuated expression of The-Christ/The-Logos, an allowing of one's Spirit-Self to extend into all aspects of one's life, so that one becomes whole. As this intimacy deepens, one begins to see various expressions of the manifestation of Love in one's life as the working together of the One-Divine-Purpose of The-Source/The-Father. There is also an extended growth of intimacy into that greater whole that is held together by The-Logos/The-Christ, and a realization of the essential oneness, unity and intimacy of all things. All of this becomes an extension to and from The-Source/The-Father, a fluid dynamic expression of Divine-Purpose.

The cultivation of intimacy with the Spirit-Self also implies the willingness to trust, that is, the letting go of debilitating fears. This will mean trusting one's own Spirit-Self to be capable of handling and dealing with different and varied aspects of life. The grounding of this intimacy is the union of love between oneself and one's Spirit-Self. This expression of union is in turn derived from The-Source's

Ground-of-Love. It is a love for one's own Spirit-Self, a desire to be that Christ-Child-of-God. As one embraces one's own intrinsic self, what is required is an allowing of this Christ-Child-of-God to be. There is, in that sense, the need to be at ease with who one senses oneself to be without fearing comparison to others because one will be getting the sense of who one is from within oneself, from that which knows itself as it truly is, as an individuated aspect of The-Christ/The-Logos, that which is One with The-Source/The-Father.

Many mystics have spoken of the culmination of this process as an ecstasy. Such ecstasy can only happen as there is a deepening sense of trust in one's own Spirit-Self and a sense of being aligned with it, thus allowing alignment with The-Christ/The-Logos and the Divine-Source. As these aspects become aligned, there is then a free-flow of the Light, Love, and Life of The-Source to oneself. This then becomes the realization of the ecstasy that mystics have spoken of, the intimacy of union of oneself with God. It is not so much that one is lost within God, but rather that one has become a receptacle, a free-flowing conduit of the life of The-Source, from The-Source into one's own environment and from one's environment to The-Source. One's life is then realized to be united in purpose with and to be an extension of The-Source's Life and Love, through The-Christ/The-Logos, into Creation, this process then re-engaging all the way back to The-Source. Sometimes this process will be accompanied by physically manifested experiences, but this need not be, because as already indicated, experiences are not an attainment as much as they are a way of accentuating certain aspects of one's growth.

The ultimate goal of all of this is to be none other than who one truly is, one's Spirit-Self. In the quest for the Spirit-Self, there is no grand display required other than the expression of one's heart desire to want to be one's truest self by allowing The-Spirit, The-Christ, The-Source, to be expressed through oneself. The only requirement is an expression of this hope. It is all within oneself, there is no other place to search. There is no other thing to realize other than that which is

already within. The vehicle of that realization is one's Spirit-Self. That Spirit-Self is an aspect of The-Christ/The-Logos, that which is already One with The-Source. It is all there, not far. The word is as close as the expression of one's heart.

Part Three

Reading Spirituality: Patterns and Prospects

4

RUMINATIONS: Transcribing the Spirit

This chapter is an exploration of various elements that emanate from the reading of spirituality texts. It explores the various levels at which the reading of spirituality functions and the manner in which these provide ways of re-engaging with the invisible realm of spirit both within and beyond the text. The range of address includes the immediate context of this study, other key authors, linkages between appreciation and improvisation, tensions between formation and information, and the trans-personal undercurrents of textual spirituality.

Interface

The reading of spirituality texts in order to garner the sense of the spiritual is largely an exercise in the cultivation of an inward ear that listens to the silences and clarities hidden beneath the various signs, symbols and signifiers. Where this sense of the spiritual is to be found, it is found much more by *attending* than by *intending*. Intentionally locating and indicating what is spiritual does have its place, but this is only in order to enable one to recognize that what is being sought is intimacy with something that is largely evanescent and non-tangible. The tangible constructs, words, become gestures and markers that point towards the intangible invisible, spirit. Although it helps to have an awareness that one is reading a text by an author who already appreciates what is being sought, such appreciation in an author does not necessarily ensure the result. All the same, what I have argued is that spirituality texts are precisely those texts written from a deliberate attempt to

presence the sense of spirit through the creativity of words. Spirituality authors *may* have varied interpretations of this goal and may name it or articulate it differently, but overall, the underlying goal is the same, an entrance into the realization of the holy, the good, the sacred, something capable of moving the human soul and spirit.

Apart from its brief introduction, Part II of this study was an attempt to derive a textual presence of spirit through three distinct modes of articulation, respectively signified in the text as Act I, Act II and Act III. The first mode (Act I), was geared towards a poetic realization of the textual sense of the spiritual. That is, the intent was to textually create the sensation of a reimagined spiritual encounter by allowing the words to gesture out of themselves leaving intact a lucid tracing of the experience which was inspiring the writing. What remains in the erasure of the words is that which is intended for the reader to garner. The focus in this sense is not on the words themselves or on the proper diction and grammatical precision of the word constructs but rather on the feel that those constructs allow or facilitate. Poetry is the best vehicle we have for doing this because it facilitates the greatest fluidity of the use of language constructs and therefore of the untethered celebration of the affect. It is from this sense that spirituality writing, and thus the best or most of the texts read in this genre, have poetic undertones. My illustration in Act I was primarily geared towards this poetic dimension of spirituality writing and only secondarily towards the creation of a recognizable format. That is, Act I is poetic because what is central in it is *feeling*, the tactile sensing and recreation of a sensuous recollecting. The form itself, that of a narrative poem, is only a vehicle for this goal. The problem is that this form of spirituality writing easily lends itself to mislabeling, as something other than spirituality or as something other than poetry. This is because the basis of its value is not really on the surface presentation as such, but rather on the undersurface aquifer of sensation and feeling that the writing is seeking to create. This approach

is perhaps the most challenging of the forms of spirituality writing, especially in academic circles, only perhaps with the exception of creative writing courses. The continual challenge is that it is a form that is primarily experimental, or more precisely, experiential, and so geared towards an affective participation. The various forms of academic accommodation that may be made for this form of spirituality writing cannot be discussed in detail here but will be highlighted in the next chapter, although suffice it to say here, that an immediate assessment is that this experiential and experimental approach represents both a promising aspect and a deleterious potential to spirituality writing.

The second form of articulation which I attempted to demonstrate in Part II of the study is of a narrative spirituality, or in other words, the derivation of a textual spiritual sense through the narration of a story (Act II). In this sense, it is the story itself that becomes the vehicle for the transportation and exchange of the spiritual sense. This form of spirituality writing is much more conventional and is therefore easily accessible both in terms of resources and expectations. The effectiveness of this form has much more to do with the skill of the author to work within expected narrative conventions in the creation of a story that is capable of creating in another (the reader) a spiritual sense of the holy, the spirit, mystery, goodness, truth, and so forth. There are many possible reasons as to why people read stories at all. Perhaps it has something to do with participative knowing, our innate need to identify with another, to transport ourselves into another time and space through our imaginations. It may be redundant to say it, but this literary domain does not belong exclusively to spirituality writing. However, spirituality writing is trying to do something specific with the format and that is to transfuse the sense of the spirit through the narrative presentation. Sadly, as many people might mistakenly assume, this attempt is not the same as what may be called 'inspirational' writing. The idea and intent is not to teach certain moral lessons or guidelines for living, *etcetera*, but rather to indicate patterns of the uncanny and

angled distributions of spiritual presence in a human life or human lives. They are instances and interstices of patterns of existence that show the resiliency of that which we think of as the human spirit and that larger reality which it is sourced from. Hopefully, one comes off with a sense that it may be possible to live life in a manner that causes existence to have meaning. The problem is that the literary narratives capable of enticing this feeling are usually buried among the many titles that add to this literary form every week. Another problem is that the form does not allow for an exact label for spirituality writing, something that may be called 'narrative spiritual literature' or such similar expressions. What this means is that one usually chances upon these kinds of texts. Fortunately, this literary form has been around for a long time, which means that there is a wealth of material that a spirituality reader, with a few initial pointers, may begin to explore. Because this is such a large content form, the important thing is to develop a personal taste and sense of content as to what constitutes the most effective vehicle for garnering a narrative textual spirituality for oneself. The challenge is not to have to wade through tomes of other texts in order to get to what one is after. Friends, bibliographies and guides are a help. My own attempt at a textual narrative spirituality in Act II was geared towards highlighting how the entrance into a story may be capable of drawing or touching something in us that is of spiritual significance. This is an important area for spirituality writing and is an important vehicle for presenting the textual spiritual sense because it facilitates hiddenness or indirectness, something that the process of spiritual realization has an affinity for.

The third form of spirituality writing demonstrated above (Act III), was geared towards a thematic or topical derivation of the sense of the spiritual. In this case, the subject itself becomes the vehicle, not only for exploring, but also for deriving the sense of the spiritual. The internal format for the presentation is something that may be termed 'intuitive writing'. It is largely the development of a trust in one's own voice and in the authenticity of one's search for truth and of

the value of the mutual recognition of that truth. This is a growing area of spirituality writing, but is one that is largely absent or unacknowledged in academic circles mainly because of its esoteric and quasi-religious trajectories. Spirituality of course, since it can be easily overlooked, is primarily something of a religious science or art. No matter what else it may be defined as, it is that attempt at getting to the essential root of the meaning of our locatedness in the universe, coming to grips with that in a deep, real, tangible manner. In that sense, thematic or topical addresses in spirituality writing will tend to revolve and resolve towards expressions of this sense of universal connectedness. Although hiddenness and indirectness are, in my opinion, the most effective formats of the apprehension and expression of spiritual truth, personal testaments of various aspects of the spiritual quest are becoming more and more prevalent in spirituality writing. They are largely derived from contextual interpretations and in that sense are perspectival in nature, with the expressed or unexpressed hope that those perspectives will strike a hidden chord which resonates with the trans-religious, trans-contextual energy that is the never ending attraction of *homo-religiosus*.

The central issue in thematic expressions of spirituality seems to be one of a contribution towards a mutual witness to truth, truth that can only be witnessed to because it is being apprehended personally and from a unique perspective. That is, this form of writing highlights the centrality of a personal sense of the authenticity of one's search for truth while at the same time understanding that that sense does not preclude the value of its expression to another, or retroactively, the value of another's expression towards one's own spiritual quest. The form presents particular challenges for the academy because of its personal presentation of themes that are of a very large and nebulous nature. The details of this academic challenge will be explored later, although suffice it to say, that in spirituality circles, it is precisely this resolution that has been settled on, that that which we call Truth is so large that the most authentic forms of what is truth come through

most clearly out of a process of personal affirmation. Truth then becomes something gathered in-between individual perspectives rather than exclusively within them. My own aim in writing Act III was to say something of both personal and trans-personal significance and to present it in a manner that allowed for a sense of completion. That is, the text is not only illustrative for spirituality writing purposes as such, but is also a genuine attempt to contribute a voice towards a growing format of giving witness to the self-searching and self-affirming aspects of spiritual truth. Mutual resonances are what ground the exchanges between writer and reader. The key for the writer is the feeling of the authenticity of his or her own spiritual quest as the searching for and the finding of something larger, variously understood as the holy, the good, the ineffable, in a word, all that is encompassed by the word God: Father/Mother/Spirit/Creation.

Prophets and Poets

Despite my efforts in Part II of this study, it stands to reason that one may have reservations about whether that text approximated enough the markers I have identified as being distinctive of spirituality texts. In such case, my hope here is to entice one towards other texts and authors that in my estimation are in the same band of the tonal frequency I was attempting to approximate in my writing. The texts and authors are those which resonate with my own authenticating sense of textual spirituality. They are additional witnesses towards what the textual presence of spirit may look like and appear as. The hope is to encourage one towards another starting point that may be able to spark that opening of awareness of spiritual textual presence irrespective of my own attempt to provide such recognition and awareness in Part II of this study. The texts and authors being proffered below have qualities about them that can be identified with two words that are of particular relevance for me, 'poetry' and 'prophecy'. In other

words, they are all poets of a sort (lovers of words and of the use of words) and are speaking towards the human need to participate in and enter into the largesse of reality (prophets).

Paulo Coelho

A vibrant awareness of spirit and a literary capability to convey it do not always go together, but when they do, such as in Brazilian writer Paulo Coelho, then a streak of genius occurs. Coelho is one of those contemporary authors who I feel is an excellent ambassador for exactly the argument of this study. Like most of those that succeed at a particular craft, there is a running theme in his work. For Coelho, the theme has to do with what he calls 'following your Personal Legend', an idea highlighted in his best known work, *The Alchemist*.¹ Not only are Coelho's stories endearing, they are of a particular imaginative quality difficult to put into words, although the words 'clean' and 'inexcessive' come to mind. What a reader garners from Coelho is how a story is capable of presenting highly specific descriptions and yet at the same time remain translucent enough to convey a sense of the Universal. In other words, the story becomes your story or my story. In some ways, this is the reason why we read stories at all, although it is not very often that one finds a writer who relates this sense of the Universal quite so vividly. In terms of the three distinctives of textual spirituality highlighted in this study, namely, the poetic, the narrative and the thematic, Coelho accesses the first two quite brilliantly. For purposes of getting a sense of how the poetic and the narrative can be combined to form a vibrant synthesis of spiritual presence, Coelho is a wonderful example. The place to begin is with *The Alchemist* and then to follow on with any of his other stories.

Ken Carey

Perhaps it is an understatement, but Ken Carey is one of those rare writers

1. Paulo Coelho, *The Alchemist: A Fable About Following Your Dream* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1998). See pages, 23-26 and 112-122, for a synthesis on following your 'personal legend'.

who comes along, once in a long while, working in an entirely different key that promises to be the beginning of a pattern for future approach. In my estimation, what Carey is achieving represents some of the very best that spirituality writing has to offer. Although it is easy to be dismissive of some of the kinds of writing that is taking place in what is generally called the 'new age' genre, anyone who reads Carey is given much pause for thought. There is in new age/spirituality circles, a kind of writing that is generally identified as 'channeling', which as the word suggests, involves the obscure retrieval of information from extraneous sources. While one cannot make sweeping judgements about this kind of work, suffice it to say, Carey's work seems to belong to a different order and category. Because the misunderstanding can easily be made, perhaps Carey himself can best make the distinction. He writes:

After a decade of hearing the term *channeling* bantered about, I am convinced that it does not apply to the process through which I access this information. . . . There is no trance involved in my reception of these thoughts, no loss of consciousness, no voice change or foreign accent. I am fully present throughout the experience. . . . It is essentially a matter of *listening*, of sensing, of feeling more fully, of opening to frequencies of thought that are normally filtered out of awareness.

The term that I think best fits what Carey is describing is the expression I have used before, 'intuitive writing'. Although some of the distinctions can become blurry, it is basically a recognition that we have largely curtailed what it is we maintain by the word 'reality'. Part of this study has been the argument for abrogating the very hard demarcations we place between our awareness of the visible and our sense of the invisible. The demarcations, I have argued, are not as hard and fast as we would like to think. Spirituality *and* spirituality writing are exercises in making the transitions between these two aspects of reality as fluid and as dynamic as possible without rendering one irrelevant or the other

2. Ken Carey, *The Third Millennium: Living in the Posthistoric World* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1995 [1991]), preface, xii-xiii.

redundant. Making this a way of living life, is something that has taken the very best of what we have attained in the lives of mystics, poets, saints, artists, and artisans from many walks of life. Although we have been trying to display various patterns of spiritual existence through our civilizations for many centuries, the crafting of words within the epicentre of visibility and invisibility, presence and absence, is something that we have only begun to explore with any sustained attention. Ken Carey, I think, is one of the foremost examples of what we may hope to achieve. Needless to say, when dealing with or reading this kind of work, what Carey highlights above concerning his writing, applies just as equally to its reading, that is, the reading also needs to become “a matter of *listening*, of sensing, of feeling more fully,” in a word, a method of *discernment* becomes key. If anything, I feel this kind of discernment or ‘intuitive affirmation’ is really the only way to read this genre of spirituality text. One has to sense or feel one’s way towards an affirmation of what is true. In this sense, truth is no longer derived from categories (categorical truth), but rather from and within a process of continued growth. It is a process of apprehending and adjusting one’s perception within the structured frameworks of one’s prior truths and knowledge commitments. The resultant is a widening and deepening of perceptual horizons.

There are two texts of Carey’s that I want to highlight and that I think form an excellent focus for what ‘intuitive writing’ is capable of delivering for kindling an awareness of spirit. The texts are: *Return of the Bird Tribes* and *The Third Millennium*.³ Overall, Carey’s work is geared towards this very realization of and the entrance into an expanded and expanding spiritual reality. In this sense, his work involves both the need for a poetic crafting of the spiritual sense and the need for a convincing thematic presentation of its attendant ideas. It is not something easily done. It requires a nuanced perception and presentation, something which

3. See, Ken Carey, *Return of the Bird Tribes* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1991); *The Third Millennium: Living in the Posthistoric World* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1995 [1991]).

Carey displays very beautifully.

Howard Thurman

I first discovered Howard Thurman when I was reading another author, Sam Keen, who writes the following of his first encounter with Thurman as a student in his class:

The first day of the seminar, Howard Thurman, then Dean of Marsh Chapel, arrived in class - a large black man with three prominent bumps on his forehead and a habit of silence so deep that it quieted everyone with whom he came in contact. He sat on the edge of the table for an eternity or so, not saying a word, looking at the dozen members of the class - I mean *really* looking. Finally, in a slow rich voice, he began to read from Admiral Byrd's account of being alone and near death at the North Pole. When he finished he paused and asked, "If you were alone, a thousand miles from any other person, it was fifty degrees below zero, and you were dying, what would have happened to allow you to die with integrity and a sense of completion?" The question dropped down beneath all the manufactured certainties of my mind and exploded in my gut like a depth charge. I knew I was in the presence of a man who thought with his mind, heart, and body stretched to their fullest.⁴

When I first read these words I asked myself what is it in a person that would cause another to express such appreciation? I decided that I had to find out for myself. I have not been disappointed. Thurman lived his life through the vast and fast expanding period of the twentieth century (1900-1981). Not that it is of much significance, only relevance, he lived that life as a black man in the United States. As a writer who wrestled with the meaning of existence, primarily through meditative thinking and writing, Thurman brings together in a luminous manner the two themes of the poetic and the thematic in spirituality writing. The theme for Thurman, is ever life and its divine attendant, God. As a way of enticing a reader to explore Thurman's work, this is how he reviews his life from the vantage of an older man facing the twilight of its existence:

Through all of this I was on my own scent. The sacred and the secular were aspects of a single reality, a single meaning. At no point could a line of separation be drawn. At long last it seems to me that the customary

4. Sam Keen, *Fire in the Belly* (New York: Bantam Books, 1991), 158.

distinction between religion and life is a specious one. . . This is the essential idiom of my religion and the quality of my own experience. There can be no cultivation of the mind, no opening of the heart to the flow of the living God, no raw laceration of the nervous system created by the agony of human suffering, pain, or tragedy; there can be no thing that does not have within it the signature of God, the Creator of life, the living substance out of which all particular manifestations of life arise; there is no thing that does not have within it as part of its essence, the imprimatur of God, the Creator of all, the Bottomer of existence. . . My testimony is that life is against all dualism. Life is One. Therefore, a way of life that is worth living must be a way worthy of life itself. Nothing less than that can abide. Always, against all that fragments and shatters and against all things that separate and divide within and without, life labors to meld together into a single harmony.⁵

There are specifically four texts of Thurman's that I would put together as forming a whole in viewing how the poetic and the thematic may be brought together through the fulcrum of a singular life, which in that same movement, allows entrance into the life of another without diminishing meaning or significance. The first text, and perhaps the best one to start with, is Thurman's autobiography, *With Head and Heart*.⁶ It was written late in life and therefore provides an expansive sense of the instances of the working of the spirit in the making of a life. The other three texts are poetic meditations on various themes but always, it seems, with the undercurrent of the themes of Life and God. They are best read ruminatively, although an initial read through is a useful exercise. Their best use is as life resources, illuminations, words of light that may guide one at critical junctures or moments of confusion. This is where the genius of Thurman seems to function most effectively. In such a case, the idea is to find a meditation or meditations that seem relevant for the present context of one's life and to meditate on them. The three meditative texts, of a set, are *Deep is the*

5. Howard Thurman, *With Head and Heart: The Autobiography of Howard Thurman* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1979), 268-269.

6. See, *ibid.*

*Hunger; Meditations of the Heart; and The Inward Journey.*⁷

Kahlil Gibran

Kahlil Gibran (1883-1931) is one of those authors who commands a certain timelessness in his work so that one cannot help but wonder where the source of inspiration is coming from. There is something about Gibran that is very ancient and yet at the same time, very contemporary. People speak of 'old souls'. Gibran, if there are such souls, is one. He died at the relatively young age of forty seven. In terms of the structure of spirituality being considered, the poetic, the narrative, and the thematic, Gibran accesses all of them with an ease that is astounding. Very little can be said by way of complement to Gibran that perhaps has not already been said elsewhere. The key element that I think highlights Gibran as a prime example for spirituality writing is his ability to speak and yet not say. This is an essential idiom in spirituality writing. The more that one traverses and encounters the largesse of spiritual reality, the more one realizes that silence is its best language of expression. The tension then becomes one of giving witness without giving away or violating that sacred spiritual reality. There is a way of doing it, a way that Gibran demonstrates very well. It involves the cultivation of a certain cadence of expression, a quietness of tone, hints and clues that gesture but never venture beyond the iridescence of spirit. This is the primary character of Gibran's art. Amazingly, he cultivated it not only in writing, but also in his drawings. His drawings are perhaps the best visual illustrator of what Gibran seemed to have been striving for in his writing. The drawings are merely suggestive, hints of presences without quite etching out the details. This is part of the rare treat in reading Gibran since most of his texts (the early publications) incorporate his drawings. The reading and the visualizing become part of a singular encounter.

7. Howard Thurman, *Deep is the Hunger: Meditations for Apostles of Sensitiveness* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1951); *Meditations of the Heart* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1953); *The Inward Journey* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961). Note: other editions of these publications exist.

I want to highly recommend Gibran as one of the best all-round representatives for capturing the essence of spirit in textual form. There are many versions of Gibran's work that have been published or re-published. Perhaps as a first read, the best is to start with a smaller compendium that samples most of his work, for example, *The Kahlil Gibran Reader*.⁸ It is an excellent publication and well worthy of collection. There are much larger collections that one may then go through or invest in. Failing these, chances are very good that one can easily come across Gibran's seminal work, *The Prophet*,⁹ which encompasses in one text, all of the best of Gibran's poetic, thematic and narrative skills in the creation of a spiritual text.

Thomas Merton

The bibliography on Thomas Merton (1915-1968), is so extensive that the danger in beginning to consider his work is that one would begin by reading texts *about* Thomas Merton rather than his original texts. Also another problem is the very wide range of texts that Merton himself produced, from political and social commentaries, monastic investigations, correspondences, comparatives of mystical paths, character studies, poetry, meditative reflections and autobiographies. What I would simply like to do here, is anchor and point a reader towards texts by Merton that would entice a sense of the spiritual genius of Merton, not only as a writer, but also as a formative influence. As a personal entry point, the texts that I find most immediately relevant to what is in view here, are texts that Merton wrote in the form of spiritual reflections, chiefly *No Man is an Island*; *Thoughts in Solitude* and, *New Seeds of Contemplation*.¹⁰

What Merton teaches is the value of knowing and hearing your own voice.

8. Kahlil Gibran, *The Kahlil Gibran Reader* (New York: Birch Lane Press, 1995).

9. Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986 [1923]).

10. Thomas Merton, *No Man is an Island* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978 [1955]); *Thoughts in Solitude* (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Cadahy, 1958); *New Seeds of Contemplation* (New York: New Directions, 1972 [1962]).

There is a relaxed acceptance in Merton of the tenor of his own voice, and also of the recognition that this voice is a voice speaking, not to a void or to an abstract known as 'the reader', but rather to a human community. This is quintessentially what spirituality writing is like and what it ultimately is for. Part of the challenge with writing spirituality is accepting this dual trajectory, especially in academic circles. Merton is an ally in this regard. The three texts noted above are examples of Merton writing at his most accessible, simply, as one would put it, giving witness to the presence of spirit in his own life and affirming the accessibility of that spirit to any other man or woman. It is difficult to highlight one central focus to Merton's spirituality writing because somewhere in his extensive bibliography, he touches each one of the spirituality writing themes that have been highlighted. The way of approach in reading him is to ease gently into his work and then to gradually tackle his more focused texts. The suggested texts are a good place to begin, and are geared towards acquainting oneself with Merton's voice, tone and textual cadence. Such familiarization is bound to be a life-long resource towards one's spiritual and meditative formation.

Appreciation and Improvisation

The derivation of the sense of the spiritual through textual works parallels the acquisition of an innate and internal sensory system about the texture of words, the form of expression and the trajectory of meaning. Like any learned art or craft, there is something of a growth involved in the process. Through practice, one begins to develop an inner ear, a tonal sense of the affirmation of spirit, something that is generally known in the arts as *appreciation*. According to Susan Feagin, textual and literary appreciation involves at least three dimensions, a theoretical component (one's beliefs about a work), an affective component (one's responses to a work), and a reflective component (one's assessment of the beliefs

and responses).¹¹ These aspects are the tools that one needs in order to cultivate appreciation as a learned craft which leads one to have an ability Feagin calls 'affective flexibility', that is, the ability to adapt to the various types of responsiveness that may be elicited by different kinds of works. Although Feagin describes this as a process which involves, "the development of the ability to shift psychological gears, to bring various psychological states on-or, off-line," textual appreciation suggests itself to be something much more mundane, and describable by an assessment as simple as whether one likes or does not like the reading of a certain text.¹² From this sense, *appreciation* is very much an aesthetic process, something inherent to the meaning of the word. What Feagin's analysis highlights however, is that there is no such thing as a permanent state of appreciation in relation to a text. It is a dynamic process that is continually impressed and impacted on by the various aspects and contexts created by our individual characters, and so creating a dynamic interaction between our beliefs, our responses, and our re-assessment of the two. This is the technical undercurrent to the reading process.

On a more immediate surface, what makes us reach for a book, that is, beyond academic and other information gathering obligations, is very much something shaped by personal taste, and our own sense and search for what is beauty, truth, goodness, that which moves us. If not for this, why read at all? This is the question that Annie Dillard poses:

Why are we reading, if not in hope of beauty laid bare, life heightened and its deepest mystery probed? . . . Why are we reading if not in hope that the writer will magnify and dramatize our days, will illuminate and inspire us with wisdom, courage, and the possibility of meaningfulness, and will press upon our minds the deepest mysteries, so we may feel again their majesty and power? What do we ever know that is higher than that power which, from

11. See, Susan Feagin, *Reading With Feeling: The Aesthetics of Appreciation*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), ch. 6.

12. See, *ibid.*, 253.

time to time, seizes our lives, and reveals us startlingly to ourselves as creatures set down here bewildered? Why does death so catch us by surprise, and why love?¹³

Reading, the way Dillard suggests it, is very much what the appreciation of spirituality texts is about. It links up with the desire of the spirituality writer to present within the text, something which another may identify as a sense of the spiritual.

Another excellent writer who speaks of a similar kind of reading process is Jorge Luis Borges. Borges identifies himself as a 'hedonistic reader', that is, someone who reads books for no other reason than the aesthetic emotions they proffer. According to Borges, these emotions are "as evident, as immediate, as indefinable as love, the taste of fruit, of water."¹⁴ Reading spirituality partakes of this ineffable character, whether directly or indirectly. The quality and sensation that one is seeking during and after the reading is in some sense evanescent, and yet quite tangible. The failure to speak very accurately about what one gains from this reading process, that is, other than the capability to recall certain facts and data, does not in itself preclude one from an inner clarity about what it is one is after and has gained. It suggests itself as a witness to something that is felt by the reader to be of import to the order of things, something ascribed in this study as *spirit*. It is this personal sense of spirit that one is wanting to discover and uncover.

An author who has written quite centrally about the appreciation of the textual is Roland Barthes. One cannot help reading Barthes without understanding that for him, texts are artifacts that are very sensual, felt, tangible, even erotic. In one place, he describes textual appreciation as a pleasure derived from what he calls, 'writing aloud'. He writes:

If it were possible to imagine an aesthetic of textual pleasure, it would have to

13. Annie Dillard, *The Writing Life* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), 72-73.

14. Jorge Luis Borges, *Seven Nights*, tr. Eliot Weinberger, (New York: New Directions, 1984), 81. See also page 7.

include *writing aloud* . . . carried not by dramatic inflections, subtle stresses, sympathetic accents, but by the grain of the voice, which is an erotic mixture of timbre and language, and can therefore also be, along with diction, the substance of an art . . . its aim is not the clarity of messages, the theater of emotions, what it searches for (in a perspective of bliss) are the pulsional incidents, the language lined with flesh, a text where we can hear the grain of the throat.¹⁵

For Barthes, like Jorge Luis Borges, textual pleasure is something ultimately unspeakable, untenable, and like love, garnered only indirectly, in process. An aesthetic of spirituality reading suggests itself to be of those dimensions. It is obvious that this is not the only way to read. There are others, which in their own contexts may have equal merit. My concern here is not to highlight various philosophical theories of reading in contrast to the art of spirituality reading, but only to point out that the latter is centrally an affective process whose main intent is to engage with what a reader, perceptive or not, may identify as depth, breadth, mystery, in a word, *spirit*.

Ultimately, the appreciation of spirituality texts may be identified with what Robert Henri identifies the role of art to be, namely, 'life'. According to Henri, art is something that "should drive you forth. It should be an incentive to life. The greatest value of art to the appreciator is in that it stimulates to personal activity."¹⁶ Effective art, or affective art, is therefore a stimulus, an opening that impels one to other possible trajectories of creativity, into other forms and structures of art. The most immediate example we have of how this process works is expressed in the art of musical improvisation. Jazz is the prime example of the art of musical improvisation. Jazz has much to teach about art and the capacity of art to open one to further creativity. In Jazz it only happens fluidly and easily through allowing oneself to be carried by the music, instinctually and intuitively. According to Derek Bailey, "there is, after all, some very basic idea behind

15. Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, tr. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), 66.

16. Robert Henri, *The Art Spirit* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1923), 196. Cf., pages 217-218.

‘improvisation’: it means getting from A to C when there is no B.”¹⁷ Where ‘B’ comes from is that vortex of creativity from which certain artists seem to be able to draw at will. In my estimation, it has much to do with allowing oneself to be moved, becoming weightless in one’s medium through what can only be identified as the experience of the transcendent, that place where questions and necessities seem to abet and run out of strength. Some artists can access this region more easily than others, but belying that fluid capability, there is a hard earned technical prowess that has been yielded up to lucid creativity in order to create something that is one and at the same time, original but recognizable, new but the same. It has much to do with cultivating the ability to see and sense connections and nuances in a panoramic view and being able to strike a balance between creation, re-creation and originality.¹⁸

While one sees quite easily the connections between artistic sensitivity and new creativity through musical mediums such as Jazz, one does not as easily see the connections between textual appreciation and textual improvisation. Much of this lack has to do with the creative ownership that is usually attached to written textual works. Because the text is a solid and non-fluid artifact, the role of its creative stimulus is usually ignored or overlooked, largely in the favour of annotated appreciations and references. When it comes to spirituality texts, this is hardly adequate. The way of writing and reading spirituality texts is predicated not so much upon a dissemination of ideas but rather upon an internal movement of affective awareness. This means that the reading is largely and primarily formative. The process of engagement with the reader entices and is meant to entice, fresh ideas and trajectories of thought and their transfusion into life. In a word, it is a spiritual exchange between the internal awareness of spirit within the writer with

17. Derek Bailey, *Improvisation: Its Nature and Practice in Music* (London: The British Library National Sound Archive, 1992), 136.

18. For these and other ideas, see Paul F. Berliner’s excellent text, *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

that which is within the reader. The place where reading, writing and re-reading, begins or ends, becomes largely a matter of semantics. The reality is that reading spirituality leads to creative improvisations in the express of ideas, whether internally or externally. The goal in the end, to reiterate Robert Henri's assertion, is the stimulation towards life. When one writes and reads spirituality, largely because of its formative impetus, textual appreciation leads quite naturally to improvisation. This is something that taps into the internal sensory system of the reader/writer, and therefore needs to be acknowledged as something taking place beyond the purview of the conventional acknowledgement of sources and annotations. Spirituality texts, because of their very nature, are a powerful source for fueling creativity and artistic expression.

While musical improvisation, as noted above, takes place in a conventional and public arena, textual improvisational creativity is something largely silent and unrecognized. The arena where it seems to slip in is in the process of the translation of texts from one language to another. Internal textual improvisations within a single language are a bit of a rarity, again, due largely to the solid and fixed nature of texts. Notwithstanding, sometimes the reading and appreciation of the ideas of a text can so spur one to improvisational creativity, that one almost feels impelled to express the churning of ideas that a text will have awakened. An example of this is Robert Bly's re-expression of Kabir's poetry as translated into English by Rabindranath Tagore assisted by Evelyn Underhill. The following is one example of Bly's appreciative improvisational creativity with ensuing commentary. The Tagore/Underhill version is on the left, and Bly's improvisation on the right:¹⁹

19. For the Tagore version see, *One Hundred Poems of Kabir*, tr. Rabindranath Tagore, assist. Evelyn Underhill (London: Macmillan, 1915), 56, poem L. For the Bly version see, *The Kabir Book: Forty-Four of the Ecstatic Poems of Kabir*, versions by Robert Bly (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 21, poem 16.

The flute of the Infinite is played
without ceasing, and its sound is
love:

When love renounces all limits, it
reaches truth.

How widely the fragrance spreads!
It has no end, nothing stands in
its way.

The form of this melody is bright
like a million suns: incomparably
sounds the vina, the vina of the
notes of truth.

The flute of interior time is played whether we
hear it or not,

What we mean by "love" is its sound coming in.

When love hits the farthest edge of excess, it
reaches a wisdom.

And the fragrance of that knowledge!

It penetrates our thick bodies,
it goes through walls –

Its network of notes has a structure as if a
million suns were arranged inside.

This tune has truth in it.

Where else have you heard a sound like this?

It is obvious that Bly has done something quite creatively engendering with the poem, and yet to try and describe it would take more words than he has used to achieve it. It is not that the Tagore version was inaccessible, it is simply that Bly has pursued other creative trajectories awakened and initiated by the initial rendering of the poetry. For example, the ideas of 'bodies' and 'walls' are not in the initial text, and yet they fit and even enhance access to the poem. Other similar critical commentaries may be made, but one hits on a particular snag that is endemic to this kind of literary criticism; by taking apart, it tends to totally ruin the effect of what is in view. One thinks here of St. Augustine's dictum: if you ask me, I do not know; if you do not ask me, I know. That is, one *knows* what Bly has effected, but if asked, it is difficult to put into words. The effect of the creative improvisation is tangibly present, but in a manner that defies radical identification and examination. It is something that has to be entered into and yielded to in order for it to reveal its full import and impact. Much of this kind of transition is what occurs hiddenly within the interface of creativity in-between the reading and writing of spirituality texts. Allowing oneself, yielding to the fluid movements of the tangentials of spirit - beauty, goodness, mystery, is what one needs to acknowledge, seek out and embrace. Where such suggestively present nuances lead may just be where one needs to be in order to discover personal truth, one's own

hidden treasure.

Reading spirituality texts appreciatively therefore means attending, listening and allowing, following through on the nuances of the sensual spiritual. The goal or desire is not so much to uncover facts or to accumulate knowledge, but rather to listen below the words. It is there that one encounters the spiritual. At this level, one is listening to one's own spiritual breath, the texture of one's own voice. In the example just proffered, 'walls' and 'bodies' would suggest themselves to be something belonging to the spiritual cadence of Bly's own internal rhythm, and yet they can still belong to the overall text.

Unfortunately, as creatively rewarding as this kind of textual processing may be, it is not something that one comes across very often. Appreciative transcriptions such as that by Bly are not common, and indeed need not be. I have however used the example to illustrate what is taking place and can be personally acknowledged to be taking place so that one can cultivate one's own personal ear so central and essential to the cultivation of the spiritual sense, what I described above as 'an innate and internal sensory system about the texture of words, the form of expression and the trajectory of meaning'. In a word it is *jazz*, infinite trajectories of creativity and re-creativity that seemingly offer something ever new and yet always the same. Played and re-played, even by the same musicians, no jazz improvisation is ever the same, *and yet*, it is!²⁰ Such is the nature of spirit, the truth of spirit, and of the textual expression of the truth of spirit.

Formation and Information

The purpose and goal of the cultivation of textual appreciation is formation. This idea underlines and puts all aspects about the nature and value of information into perspective light. Put simply, *information is for formation*. Nowhere has this idea

20. See, Paul F. Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz*, 268-273.

been brought more to the forefront than in the shadow of the informational technology advancements of the last decade of the twentieth century. The 1990's saw an exponential growth in what most people had by then considered easy access to various information sources. This was largely due to the creation of an informational zone generally known as the Internet, something which has insurmountably revised and revamped how access to information is gained. With the press of a few keys, one can now have access to information resources that previously would have taken weeks, if not months, to accumulate. This relative freedom of access to information has however created a unique phenomenon - the problem of an excess or redundant amount of information, the now infamous 'information glut'. A glut of course, suggests an excess of supply so that one can no longer as easily access what one actually needs because one has to wade through redundant streams of information. That this has been realized through the agency of computer technology belies the fact that the seeds of the cumulative trend emanated from the manner in which sources of information had gradually been externalized, whether through books, newspapers, visual/audio media and computerization. In this case, it is not simply the Internet that is the source of the information redundancy but rather the general trend which had foreshadowed what Neil Postman calls an "information chaos".²¹ The chaotic dimensions of the information culture or economy, emanate from the general failure to discern that all information has a tendentious form of agency, an impactive dimension. This is the fact that Postman and also Peter Herschok have strived to point out. As Postman puts it, "New technologies alter the structure of our interests: the things we think *about*. They alter the character of our symbols: the things we think *with*. And they alter the nature of community: the arena in which thoughts develop."²²

21. Neil Postman, *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 60.

22. *Ibid.*, 20.

Hershock's concurrent assessment is that media technologies tacitly reconfigure our awareness and contribute to what he calls "the ongoing colonization of consciousness".²³ In other words, it is not simply that there is an over-abundance of information, but rather that the reality of that excess, its structures and its inherent content, shifts our awareness and experience of reality.

The general failure to appreciate the impactful aspect of information sources emanates from an oversight to ask the very simple question: *What is information for, from whom, for whom?* In Postman's and Hershock's assessment, this is highlighted by the general cultural assumption that runs along the lines of the rhyme, 'more information is good, less information is bad'. This, according to Postman, has had the effect of raising information to a 'metaphysical status' of an end in itself, always faster, better, more, without an attendant valuation of what it is for, hence the unquestioned prevalence of teleological terms like 'Information Age' or 'Information Economy'.²⁴ Another problem, astutely worked out by Hershock, is how this ascendance of information technologies actually undermines the celebration and participation of the cultural diversities they purportedly promote because they largely operate on a principle of 'homogenization'. In Hershock's words, this is because "the values they express stand in such diametric opposition to those prevailing in cultures . . . where communication is not the successful exchange of information, but the harmonious sharing of a common perspective."²⁵

In short, what the preceding shortcomings of the information paradigm highlight is the absence of a directed purpose towards the gathering and dispersion of information, something which would largely translate into the recognition that

23. See, Peter D. Hershock, *Reinventing the Wheel: A Buddhist Response to the Information Age* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), xii, also, 79-85.

24. See, Postman, *Technopoly*, 60-61.

25. Hershock, *Reinventing the Wheel*, xv.

information is primarily for the purpose of formation, whether individually, communally or globally. This purposive or teleological caveat to the contemporary information culture presents particular challenges to the reading of spirituality because it results in the relativization of all sources of information by emptying them of meaning, purpose and goal. Contrary to this open-ended aspect of the larger information culture, reading spirituality *is* quite purposeful and is predicated upon the spiritual and affective dimension of information sources. From this sense, the reading of spirituality is based on the understanding that there is no such thing as value-less information, that all information is value-laden and is therefore impactive *and* formative. With this awareness, there is therefore a need for an overall informing paradigm with which one approaches various textual and other sources of information. The contemporary reading of spirituality is in great need of just such an undergirding framework.

Within the religious communities, the awareness of the nature, structure and spiritual impact of information has been most closely mirrored in the monastic tradition of *lectio divina*, generally translated as 'spiritual or divine reading'. As defined by Columba Cary-Elwes, *lectio divina* is "meditative pondering, 'chewing' or masticating, assimilating . . . the opposite of speed reading. Normally the reading would be aloud with the object of learning by heart, so as to continue the assimilation during the day. . . . Modern reading has as object information or recreation; *lectio divina's* purpose is to provide fuel for the mind and heart to raise the soul to God in contemplation."²⁶ The reading of spirituality, especially in the light of the contemporary ascendance of information sources, may also be seen as an aspect of the practise of an internal *lectio divina*. It partakes of the same cultivation of a ruminative awareness of the cadences of the text that one may be reading. Fortunately, there is a growing understanding that this kind of reading is

26. Columba Cary-Elwes, *Experiences with God: A Dictionary of Spirituality and Prayer* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1986), 124-125.

in need of preservation, recognition and cultivation, hence the recent and frequent publication of literary collections and annotated bibliographies. The titles generally highlight this intent, for example, *The Education of the Heart*; *Spiritual Literacy: Reading the Sacred in Everyday Life*; *Take and Read - Spiritual Reading: An Annotated List*.²⁷ Various, the kind of reading in view is highlighted as “the art of educating or bringing out what is latent in a person . . . making visible what is hidden as seed” (Moore); or as “the ability to read signs written in the texts of our own experiences . . . to discern and decipher a world full of meaning” (Brussat); or as “reading that shapes the heart at the same time that it informs the intellect” (Peterson).²⁸ The emphasis of these various definitions is on the formative or evocative aspect of the reading. That is, spiritual reading is seen as impacting the life of the one who engages in it at the deepest levels of their personhood, hence the use of words like *person*, *meaning*, *heart* and *intellect*. There is a deliberateness attendant to the process as there is in *lectio divina*, a conscious ruminative and meditative attention.

In light of the information milieu in which this form of spiritual reading is being recovered, it is obvious that some kind of selective process is warranted. The amount of published texts alone, even in the spirituality genre, ensures that one cannot attend to every text in this same ruminative, meditative manner. A means of vetting what one reads is essential, mainly because reading spiritually indicates that one realizes that the ultimate goal of what one is reading is *formation*. In the specific sense, it is *spiritual* formation and citing Thomas Merton, one of the key lessons of spiritual formation is “being content to miss something in almost everything we do . . . finding out precisely what the “one thing necessary” may be,

27. See; Thomas Moore, ed., *The Education of the Heart* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996); Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, eds., *Spiritual Literacy: Reading the Sacred in Everyday Life* (New York: Scribner, 1996); Eugene H. Peterson, *Take and Read - Spiritual Reading: An Annotated List* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1996).

28. Respectively; Moore, *Education of the Heart*, 3; Brussat, *Spiritual Literacy*, 15; Peterson, *Take and Read*, x.

in our lives, and gladly relinquishing all the rest"²⁹. In this sense, spiritual reading or reading spirituality, goes counter to the information amassing culture that we are largely caught up in. This means that the key to what one reads lies not so much in what is published or what is available, but rather emanates from an inner need that demands expression and address. It is this inner region of enticement that determines what one reaches for from various information sources. This formative voice only finds expression as one listens and attends to one's own inner awareness and understands what is taking place within oneself as being of spiritual significance. The challenge for reading spirituality is to then link what one is sensing internally with the particular spiritual expression of a specific text. Sometimes one finds that a certain author always seems to address issues that are of currency within oneself and this becomes one way of cultivating an engaged attentive reading (*lectio divina*). Another possible avenue is to browse through literary collections and annotated bibliographies such as those noted above. In those cases, what one may find is a particular citation or summary of a text that entices something within oneself, thus providing a basis for choosing what text to add to what one wishes to explore and be engaged with.

From the preceding, it is clear that reading as spiritual formation involves the larger awareness of the reality-forming and consciousness-molding aspects that Neil Postman and Peter Herschok highlighted above as needing to be held in tandem with what one perceives as information. This simply means that there is no information stream that is not at some level 'formative', and this is so whether one is aware of such formation or not. Awareness that information is for formation is the first step towards cultivating how one responds to the various information sources that constantly impinge upon one's attention and experience of reality. From this initial awareness, what actually becomes formative is not so much the information source itself, but rather one's responses to such information source.

29. Thomas Merton, *No Man is an Island*, 130.

This second level of formative awareness only exists in light of the initial awareness that all information is formative. Such formative response is shaped by one's structural understanding of where information, and its attendant formative dimension, is ultimately directed.

According to Mary Midgley, *knowledge* was classically understood to be related to *wisdom*, something which in turn was understood to emanate from a centre of reality identified as *goodness*. In contrast to this classical structure, the contemporary milieu largely subsumes *knowledge* or *information*, under the umbrella term *science*, which in turns derives its significance not from a reality centre (e.g., goodness, spirit, tao), but from a constantly re-created and re-enacted *discovery* of the new.³⁰ It is the loss of a centre from which the attendant interaction with knowledge is derived that is to be lamented and is partly the cause of what is generally identified as post-modern angst. Without such a centre or fulcrum, the resultant has been akin to being tossed about upon a sea of information that one has lost control over, with the result that information is related to on the metaphysical level of being both the process *and* end of human activity and economy.³¹

What I have variously suggested throughout this study is that the centre of our continual interaction with various aspects of reality has to be something that is capable of traversing the gaps or what we experience as the gaps between the visible and invisible aspects of reality. In this regard, it has to be something that is seen as residing both within oneself *and* beyond oneself, if at all it is to be capable of providing proper navigation between the various visible and invisible processes and contexts that one may encounter in the experience of reality. I have variously labeled that aspect of reality to be *spirit*. That is, spirit is not only for the purposes

30. See, Mary Midgley, *Wisdom, Information and Wonder: What is Knowledge for?* (London: Routledge, 1989), 13-15.

31. See, Neil Postman, *Technopoly*, 60-61.

of navigating various aspects of reality, it is also the very grounds out of which that reality emanates. In this sense, the process and end reside within the one principle, and following Postman's precedent, one could call this overall proposition, a metaphysic of spirit.

The structural format that informs and undergirds the reading of spirituality is thus informed by the awareness that one is participating in and deriving significance from the ground of reality whose centre is not only beyond oneself, but somehow, also within oneself. This becomes something akin to an orientating map which Mary Midgley sees as quite necessary for what she calls, "large-scale forms of thought," that is, patterns of thinking which require the ability to navigate and look at things with a wide purview.³² In a sense, the orientating map or maps become the guiding myths with which one not only navigates various sources of in-formation but also vets and assesses such information. Personal myths, or orientating maps, can of course be as varied as there are the number of people espousing them. In this case, what is of importance is that larger context or ground from which all of our individual personal maps derive their own orientation, similar to how multiple and varied compasses derive their orientation from the magnetic poles. Such orientation is derived from what we generally identify as spirit, the ground and process out of which reality is sprung. In a sense, our individual personal myths only have significance when they participate in and point towards such ground of being, non-being and becoming.

What all of this means, especially in a cultural milieu some are labeling as an 'Information Age', is that despite the protuberance of information sources, at bottom, spirituality reading is trying to uncover and participate in something primordial, though quite contemporary. It is seeking to discover, no matter how fleetingly, that pattern or process by which one's own life bears significance with everything else - the timeless, the eternal, the temporal. Putting it into question

32. Ibid., 46.

form: What is that point where, who and what I am, is of significance to who and what is? The overall suggestibility of reality is that what is, is *spirit*.³³ Spirituality reading is geared towards this participative affirmation of reality whose trajectories may be seen as goodness, holiness, mystery, wonderful, tremendous. In the larger sense, this is all part of the process of *lectio divina*, which as Eugene Peterson astutely points out, is a much larger world than simply the process of spiritual reading (*lectio*), for it also involves meditation (*meditatio*), prayer (*oratio*) and contemplation (*contemplatio*).³⁴ Spiritual reading, as far as it is a participation in this transcription of the divine, is concerned with the whole life of the individual and therefore incorporates all of these aspects, which together map out the organic structure of textual spiritual formation. In this sense, the world of spirituality reading is like a concentric spiral that incorporates everything that a reader encounters into its structure and orbit of meaning. Strictly speaking, as I am ascribing the process, there is no demarcation between sacred and secular texts, since the larger and informing background 'text', is always *spirit*. The question then becomes one of how the spatial and incidental texts participate in and draw from this central and invisible text into which the visible aspects of reality are inscribed.

Affirmation and Conformation

If information is for formation, the question that still needs answering is what exactly one is being formed towards and into. What this study is suggesting in various guises, is that the source, end, and process of our formation into identities, is that which is understood to be *spirit*, that which grounds reality into existence and existence into life. Spirit is the ground and basis upon which all things and non-things are held into the essence of their being or non-being. This is

33. See, chapter 2, section titled, "Reality and Spirit".

34. See, Eugene H. Peterson, "Caveat Lector", *Crux* 32.1 (1996), 2-12.

the context in which the reading of spirituality takes place. The goal of the reading is therefore the playful uncovering of spiritual reality. In the end, all spiritual exploration is geared towards a joyful and inspiring re-discovery of the nature of spirit and of our mutual participation in its reality. Reading and writing spirituality is only one aspect of this playful uncovering.

What the preceding establishes about all spiritual endeavour, already hinted at, is that spirituality is not a haphazard enterprise or in the end, a freeform activity. Spirituality takes place in the context of a larger reality that is already there prior to such endeavour. The spiritual quest, of which reading and writing is an aspect, may therefore be seen as the intent to affirm that which reality suggests itself to be and to conform oneself to its pattern of being. In this sense, the spiritual quest, together with its experiential dimension, is not merely for the facilitation of *confirming* reality as spiritually grounded, but rather for the facilitation of *conforming* one's identity and sense of being to that formative ground of reality. Any spirituality falls short and becomes perniciously hazardous which does not see its ultimate goal as the formation of id-entities which conform to what the ground of reality suggests itself to be. This also means that there are certain ultimate limits to the process of uncovering the nature of our being and the nature of reality, whether that is through transcription or inscription. In this light, as Earle Coleman points out, the goal of artistic freedom is ultimately *surrender* to that which is, and harmonization with it:

Although apparently paradoxical, the only way to freedom, for the artist and the religious person alike, is through surrender. One must put herself in accord with that which is natural. Lest one interpret surrender as an abandonment to utter irrationality, religions identify the natural as the touchstone of rationality. To go against the grain of nature is to meet obstructions, whether one is coming to terms with the principles and media of art or struggling with divine laws. As the eminent American architect Louis Kahn insisted, no architecture is possible without the cooperation of nature. Similarly, no spiritual cultivation is possible without conformity to the logos, Tao, or God. Artists and saints are free if and only if they put themselves in accord with the inexorable. Freedom, in either case, is a thoughtful harmonization as opposed

to an irrational rebellion.³⁵

From this sense, what we are being formed into, or harmonizing ourselves towards, are beings whose centres of identity mutually partake of and participate in that which grounds reality: God, Spirit, Tao. This is the ultimate horizon for all spirituality reading and writing. As already suggested, it is a horizon that already has its own internal character. No matter how much an artist may feel compelled or challenged by this ultimate horizon of meaning, its qualities suggest themselves to be of something very large, fluid and dynamic.

One of the key ways in which the endless cultivation of spiritual imagination has been cultivated and continues to be cultivated is in the mythical stories of the spiritual quest. Myths, stories, meta and minor narratives, are quite central to what takes place within the writing and reading of spirituality texts.³⁶ To a very large extent the individual reading (and writing) of spirituality texts is merely one's own sense of an individuated pattern of participation in the larger meta-narratives that one ascribes to. Myths/stories are therefore illustrations of ways of participating and conforming oneself to the largesse of reality that is spirit. As pointed out by Malekin and Yarrow, this becomes "the search for a continuously available 'new beginning' (or 'return to origins' in various forms)."³⁷ The patterns, as they astutely show, are many and varied, and yet coherently the same:

For the listener or reader probably all myths can indeed be interpreted within the framework of a search for more knowledge, provided knowledge encompasses wisdom and is modal to being, rather than a mere collection of information . . . such a framework is particularly applicable to hero-adventure myths. The search for 'knowledge' includes new or renewed understanding, new ways of seeing, new forms of behaviour, new codes of practice . . . Hence

35. Earle J. Coleman, *Creativity and Spirituality: Bonds Between Art and Religion* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 180.

36. See, "Story and Text", in chapter 2.

37. Peter Malekin and Ralph Yarrow, *Consciousness, Literature and Theatre: Theory and Beyond* (London: Macmillan Press, 1997), 172.

the search for knowledge is also a search for new stories to tell, the search for the source of narrative, syntax, discourse itself.³⁸

Myths are stories about the quest for being, an expanding and contracting spiral of the horizons of meaning. The danger of course, is of how some mythical meta-narratives become so completely over-arching that they begin to suffocate any sense of one's own creative participation in the ground of reality. Part of the task of reading spirituality is therefore the expansion of these pattern myths so that they become elastic enough to accommodate one's own unique participation in them. In this sense, what they end up revealing is not so much patterns of being, but rather instances of patterns of being. What allows for the release of their potency is an individual affirmation of what the stories suggest and reveal, especially about the ground of being and its ultimate horizon. Without a sense of personal input of feeling into the story structure, the myths essentially remain outside the internal movements, mental and spiritual, that form one's individual identity. This means that an individual dimension of the conformation and affirmation of spirit is indispensable.

There is therefore both a co-formative and individual orbit to the spiritual formation that the reading of spirituality texts accounts for. Coleman explains it as the "coincidence of the Universal and the Particular", something which consists in being able to grasp "what is unchanging, unconditioned, e.g., a truth about human nature or a recurring feature of existence."³⁹ Such an embrace of the unchanging, the non-temporal and therefore eternal, can only be grasped and embraced in the individual instance of a particular life. The reading and exploration of spirituality is merely a facilitation of this process. In the end, this means that all spirituality partakes of a dynamic impetus. There is no such thing as a completed spirituality. Following Robert Wuthnow, all spirituality is 'creative spirituality' because, as he

38. *Ibid.*, 173.

39. Earle J. Coleman, *Creativity and Spirituality*, 33, 34-35.

puts it, "one has to connect the dots between religious traditions and daily life, between universal truths and unique experience."⁴⁰

The individual affirmation contained within spiritual exploration therefore suggests itself to only be an aspect of a much larger process of co-formation towards the depth reality of spirit. The universal orbit of spirituality demands that all spiritual truth and understanding be related to some larger community that one sees oneself participating in. The background truth to this understanding is that there are really no communities in the plural sense, since community in the spiritual sense is simply the co-affirmation of the co-arising depth of reality that all individuals and groups are beholden to. The various dresses of community that one may come across are therefore only perspectival mirrors of this core depth of reality we call spirit. Notwithstanding this qualifier, there is also an individual affirmation that must take place on what one may identify as a group level. Without such easily identifiable group structures, the individual affirmation and conformation to spirit so essential to spirituality, would be curtailed or made very difficult. Some form of community identity is therefore essential to the reading and writing of spirituality. Community in this sense is some form of group identity beyond the individual where the celebration of the universal and particular may take place, where affirmation and conformation become conjoined. This community identity does not necessarily imply physicality or materiality. It is simply the sense of mutual affirmation and comportment towards the universal spiritual. In this sense, there is a wide range of how the community imperative of spirituality may be satisfied.

The problem that needs to be borne in mind concerning all forms of community or group identity is how they easily lend themselves to exclusivity, something which goes completely counter to what the ground of reality suggests

40. Robert Wuthnow, *Creative Spirituality: The Way of the Artist* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 269.

itself to be composed of. This is because every group or community by that very identifier, is an ascription to a particularized or nuanced interpretation of the ground of reality. In some sense, this involves a constriction of the largesse of spiritual reality and the particularization of the process of interpretation. There is essentially nothing wrong with this. What needs to be remembered though, as Malekin and Yarrow point out, is that:

The world-views of all interpreters involve unproveable *a priori* assumptions, and are in their nature relative, the process of interpretation in fact amounts to the translation of one person's myth into the terms of another person's myth. This is inevitable and reasonable as a process of understanding, but the process tends to work in both directions, the myth of the interpreter being interpretable by the myth he interprets.⁴¹

The reading of spirituality partakes of this mutuality of interpretation. The idea is not to fear this inherent process, but rather to be keenly aware of its taking place. Such awareness is what is generally identified as *criticism* or in spiritual tenor, *discernment*. Discernment is a better suited term because it suggests openness and neutrality, something necessary for the mutual embrace of the good, of the holy, of spirit. As suggested above, the necessity for this caveat emanates from the fact that there is no separate self-standing place to reality. We are constantly impinged on by external sources of information whose overall orientation is always impactive and formative. Even if one chooses to be somewhat exclusive in terms of sources and group identity, this does not mean that the process of interpretation ceases to be mutually impactive. Transcriptions of world-views, myths, meta-narratives, are constantly in a state of dynamic flux as one ascribes to them and alternatively transcribes them into the personal context. Translation and interpretation is a constant feature of this process.

Another way this expresses is in J. A. Appleyard's analysis of reading as

41. Peter Malekin and Ralph Yarrow, *Consciousness, Literature and Theatre*, 94. See also, J. A. Appleyard, "Imagination's Arc: The Spiritual Development of Readers", in *Seeing Into the Life of Things: Essays on Religion and Literature*, ed. J. L. Mahoney (New York: Fordham University Press, 1998), 53-54.

involving a dialogue between the *literary* text and the *social* text of the reader.⁴² That is, it is not only the social text of the reader which incorporates a myriad varieties of *a-priori* understandings. What is often overlooked is that each literary text also subscribes to certain world-views and transcriptions of reality. Somewhere in-between this vortex is where the reading of spirituality texts, and indeed all reading, takes place. The reading of spirituality is however not ungrounded, as this interpretation might suggest. Reading spirituality is an affirmation of reality that sees that affirmation, textual or otherwise, as arising from the nature of reality as fundamentally spiritual. In a sense, it is a view of the context in which, not only the reading and writing of texts takes place, but also the writing and reading of identities (life) takes place. The adventure of exploring spirituality through reading (and writing) is the exploration of and the finding of those particular inflections and trajectories that make this a pleasurable and enjoyable convergence of meaning at both the personal and trans-personal level.

What the preceding annotations variously suggest about the reading (and writing) of spirituality are the multiple and varied angled patterns through which the ground of reality participates in and interacts with the fulcrum and structures of existence. All of this suggests that there are a myriad endless variations capable of expressing the way in which spirit, variously related to as goodness, mystery, depth, wholeness, holiness - desires to reveal and make itself known to us. It is the possibility of such presentational nuances that make spirituality an unceasing font of *inspiration*. Each individual is therefore a unique expression of the angled trajectories along which spirit interacts with life and reality, each one the same and yet quite identifiable as an individual expression. Reading texts that explore individual expressions of spirituality, for example Ehrlich's or Wuthnow's, make

42. See, J. A. Appleyard, "Imagination's Arc: The Spiritual Development of Readers", 53-54.

this abundantly clear.⁴³ Wuthnow's text is titled *Creative Spirituality* as a way of reflecting just this particular dynamic to spiritual expression. It is also a reflection that the approach that spirituality takes and manifests as, is largely artistic in tenor, and as one of the character studies in Wuthnow's book expresses it, it is about finding that particular spiritual rhythm that distinguishes one: "a compositional structure, a certain flair, a certain thing that was mine", and developing that into a "body of work", whatever that body of work may be.⁴⁴

Reading (and writing) spirituality is therefore a process of acquainting ourselves with the wonderful nuances and inflections of the entrance of spirit into our particular lives. It becomes the hidden unknown which is sensed and whose ultimate discovery and uncovering entices us to dive again into the mystery of things so we can do it better - relate and conform our lives to that which constantly suggests itself to *be* and to the *way* it suggests itself to be. What suggests itself to be is spirit and the way it suggests itself to be, is that fluid dynamic fulcrum around which all of reality (visible and invisible) seems to turn. The familiar expression of this dynamic is of breath, something essentially invisible and yet with properties that make the mundane aspects of reality like arms, legs and eyes, to be directed towards meaning-finding and meaning-giving purposes. In this sense, the invisible is that enlivening quality of reality which suggests itself to be of vast significance to everything and to the very nature of those things. Writing and reading spirituality, and indeed all art forms, are at bottom, articulations of ways in which we affirm how this is so and of the many, wonderful, beautiful, and creative ways in which we can conform ourselves, our lives, our beings, to this way of things.

What the practice and pursuit of spirituality reveals over and over again, is

43. See, Dimitri Ehrlich, *Inside the Music: Conversations with Contemporary Musicians about Spirituality, Creativity and Consciousness* (Boston: Shambhala, 1997). See also, Robert Wuthnow, *Creative Spirituality: The Way of the Artist* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

44. See, Wuthnow, *Creative Spirituality*, 91.

how our conforming to the way of things is very much like a hide and seek game, an apophasis which hovers somewhere between complete openness and utter hiddenness. The trajectory of our relationality to this *way* of things is therefore itself *a way* of being, something very clearly articulated in the classic text *Tao Te Ching*, which translates as '*the book of the way and its way*'. The way of the way is nuanced, strange, limpid, overcoming, humble, lowly, hidden, quiet, silent, evanescent, interior, transformative. According to the *Tao Te Ching*, these qualities of the way are like the qualities of water, and the sage is that person who is able to incorporate them into his or her way of being. Howard Thurman calls such a person, an "Apostle of Sensitiveness", that is, someone who has "a sense of what is vital, a basic and underlying awareness of life and its potentialities at every level of experience".⁴⁵ The reading or writing of texts that seek to bring this awareness to the forefront is a practice in this kind of sensitivity. It is a textual form of spiritual sensitivity. What the writing and reading of spirituality is trying to achieve is the pressing of texts and words into such service of spirit. Because spirit is what is being sought and what is doing the attracting, the way of words, if at all it is to achieve the goal, must mirror this inner essence of the nature of reality, an inner essence which suggests itself to also be at the very centre of our own individual identities.

Absence and Silence

Ultimately, the hidden mystery of spirit cannot be uncovered, exposed to a final form of scrutiny. No matter how well crafted and nuanced, no definitive text may be created that is able to reveal or expose the reality of spirit in its complete nakedness. This may be a frustration to any aspiring reader or writer of spirituality

45. Howard Thurman, *Deep is the Hunger: Meditations for Apostles of Sensitiveness* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951), xi.

texts. It means that the sensitivity of cultivating the spiritual ear or voice, involves at its roots, the acceptance of partiality. Maturity is the realization that only the shape, sense, texture of spirit may be garnered, and that these may together form what one may begin to see as the outline of the depth reality of spirit. What is important about the reading and writing of spirituality texts is that through this literary form, one may garner the sensation of what is generally called the ineffable, hints and clues that lead to wonder, the understanding that there just might be something more - beauty, depth, mystery, goodness - at the centre of life and existence.⁴⁶ As Abraham Heschel puts it, "in moments of insight the ineffable is a metaphor in a forgotten mother tongue".⁴⁷ In other words, the ineffable is the sense of recognition that there is something beyond such sensation that is beckoning and needing to be embraced, given room to be. How we recover this 'forgotten mother tongue' is through the cultivation and attunement of ourselves to the patterns of hints and clues with which spirit approaches us. This cultivation is therefore more than the articulation of ineffability, it is rather the apparently insurmountable task of finding ways of embracing the originating source of that sense of the ineffable. The idea is not only to recover our forgotten mother tongue, but to also find ways of getting back to the motherland where we may utilize that recovered language of spirit. How we do this and how we incorporate the language into our reading and writing and into our spiritual lives is key. It involves a penetrative re-perception of reality, both visible and invisible.

Timothy Walsh in his very incisive text *The Dark Matter of Words*, outlines how the failure of words to properly accommodate aspects of reality, especially aspects that partake of the nature of ineffability, tends to be resolved by reverting back to a constantly recurring boundary marked out by the word "something".

46. See chapter 2, section on "Ineffability and Indirectness" for further exploration.

47. Abraham J. Heschel, *Man is Not Alone: A Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1951), 75.

According to Walsh, this withdrawing “something”:

- not so much an empty word but rather one of ever-virtual potential - grants transcendence a semantic and grammatical home, thus implicitly legitimizing such visionary awareness without incurring any obligation to explain it. Indeed the complete reliance on such a weightless and untethered word tacitly suggests that such flickering intimations will always remain beyond final discursive embodiment.⁴⁸

“Something” is therefore a substitute for that which cannot or may not be put into words. In that sense, it becomes, as Walsh puts it, “the supremely empty word”⁴⁹. It ceases to function as a word at all and begins to take on the mere characteristics of identifier and marker gesturing towards the unnameable. Within the textual spiritual quest, it is a road sign indicating the point where one is to leap over the edge into the beyond. The identifier becomes an ultimate ineffability marker, the edge where language refuses to go any farther, and this not simply because more words could not be proffered, but rather more through the realization that words have become furtive and empty. Something else (pun unintended) entices, whose characteristics become more and more capable of adequately handling the awkward moment of the breakdown of language and words. This something else, which is therefore something beyond language, beyond words, may simply be termed the beyond. This unspeaking beyond, experienced as a wordless absence, is the basis upon which we finally surmount the strength to embrace what the faltering words would have been hinting for us to do, embrace silence, encounter the absence.

The gradual ascendance of silence through the embrace of the wordless absence comes about only through the realization of our re-perception of the paradox of reality and existence. An excellent example of how this process works

48. Timothy Walsh, *The Dark Matter of Words: Absence, Unknowing, and Emptiness in Literature* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1998), 153.

49. *Ibid.*, 154.

occurs in Zen Buddhism's philosophy of 'is/is not' (*soku hi*).⁵⁰ As expressed by Robert Carter, the basic premise, "is the identification of the is, and the is not. A is A; A is not-A, therefore A is A. I see the mountains. I see that there are no mountains. Therefore, I see the mountains again, but as transformed. And the transformation is that the mountains both are and are not mountains. That is their reality".⁵¹ The three movements of perception only function through an apophatic fulcrum which brings to the fore the realization that the initial construct, quite emphatically, also contains its opposite. In context, this parallels the realization of the failure of words to articulate the nature and reality of spirit. In that instance, the articulation of words is seen as an emptiness and absence, therefore A is indeed not-A. This apophatic crux may incorporate a crisis because the artist (reader/writer) is placed in a quandary concerning what to do with the new realization. The tenor of the quandary is well expressed by Jerzy Peterkiewicz:

What often happens is this: realizing that the silence behind words must have a purpose, the poet decides to stop at this point. This is his negative acceptance of failure. Should he, however, desire to explore the other side of silence, his acceptance would be positive, but in the same difficult sense that the mystic's acceptance is positive when he merely exercises his spiritual faculties. The practitioner of verse has come close to the practitioner of spiritual silence, and at this moment his understanding of language needs no words to express the understanding. The paradox has turned round on itself.⁵²

Faced with the juxtaposition of presence and absence, words and the wordless, the artist may simply turn back or cease the artistic endeavour. This is what Peterkiewicz is calling 'negative acceptance'. On the other hand, 'positive acceptance' involves the third phase of the 'is/is not' paradox. It is a very nuanced

50. The key proponents for the philosophy are Nishida Kitaro, Daisetz T. Suzuki, and Keiji Nishitani. See, Robert E. Carter, "Paradox, Language, and Reality", in *God, the Self and Nothingness: Reflections Eastern and Western*, ed. Robert E. Carter (New York: Paragon House, 1990), 245-264; Daniel Charles, "Nishitani on the Self: Selflessness and Historicity", in *God, the Self and Nothingness: Reflections Eastern and Western*, ed. Robert E. Carter (New York: Paragon House, 1990), 211-221.

51. Robert E. Carter, "Paradox, Language, and Reality", 255.

52. Jerzy Peterkiewicz, *The Other Side of Silence: The Poet at the Limits of Language* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 116.

re-perception of the initial ground of encounter. In simple statement, it appears quite exactly like the initial construct, A is A. However, the third phase, *therefore* A is A, is only realized through its negative counterpoint, the apophatic fulcrum, A is not-A. What has happened at the third phase is the realization of the inherent infusion of the apophatic (absence/invisibility) within the kataphatic (presence/visibility). This realization alone changes how the initial construct is seen and related to, and *that*, is the whole point of the mystical and spiritual quests. When this is grasped, it constitutes the ascendance of silence over presence. Presence is realized as fraught with absence and as a mere fabrication (fabric?) for the facilitation of the hiddenness of the beyond. Silence becomes the key through which the embrace of absence and emptiness is entered into and lived in a new interrelation with presence. Taoism, like Zen Buddhism, has a parallel way of expressing this paradox of perceptive realization and terms it, *wu-wei*.⁵³ *Wu-wei* may be translated as "actionless action", and this understanding immediately forces one to confront the inherent negation of affirmation. As is clear, the site of 'actionless action' does not consist of inaction as such, but rather of an emptied action, an inactive action, or within context, a silent presence. Putting it in terms of the 'is/is not' logic, the phases of the apprehension of reality may therefore be seen as: Presence (A is A), Absence (A is not-A), Silence (A is A). What should not be overlooked, is that phase three Silence, is actually a re-perceived nuanced presence, or in another formulation, it is an altogether inter-penetrative embrace of presence *and* absence.

An important idea that the preceding highlights is that the silence that is encountered beyond the apophatic fulcrum of presence is not a qualityless silence. That is, in and within itself it becomes suggestive of another stratum to presence that had been initially overlooked or missed. The silence is itself the final absent

53. See, D. C. Lau, "Introduction", in *Lao Tzu: Tao Te Ching*, trans. D. C. Lau (London: Penguin Books, 1963), xxix.

ground of presence whose sense or quality is a kind of gesture towards what reveals itself as the true ground of presence: God or Spirit. According to Abraham Joshua Heschel, this is the true function of the sense of what lies beyond the ineffable, to lead one to a plane where one is confronted with divine presence, a presence which *may* be defied but never denied.⁵⁴ This silent divine presence that the sense of the ineffable facilitates is all the more impacting because it finally reveals to the artist, poet, and mystic alike, as Heschel puts it, that “the world is an open house in which the presence of the owner is so well concealed that we usually mistake His discretion for nonexistence”.⁵⁵

The encounter with absence and silence is therefore not complete until it has been recast into a new accounting of presence and a consequent re-embrace of ‘new’ reality. What one discovers in this second embrace, is to all extents, the very same reality that one was encountering at the beginning, but now suffused with a potent and compelling meaning. Meaning is now derived from an absent presence that can only be related to through a nuanced and qualitative silence. That is, as expressed by Peterkiewicz; “Silence resembles a listening companion rather than a place emptied of all sounds. It has the attentive quality of a person. What is unspoken may be intended and therefore imply meaning.”⁵⁶ At bottom therefore, our uncovering of the spiritual ground of reality is not an abstract intellectual exercise but rather the entrance into an interrelation between persons, between an *I* and a *Thou*.⁵⁷ The *Thou* is that silent absent/present Other encountered through silence as something infinite, all-encompassing, and intimate. This is the whole crux of the mystical/spiritual quests, a direct participative embrace of the hidden ground of reality which turns out to be living, breathing, vibrant, personal, but also

54. See, Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Man is Not Alone*, 67-68.

55. *Ibid.*, 64.

56. Jerzy Peterkiewicz, *The Other Side of Silence*, 69.

57. For an incisive analysis of the *I* and *Thou* themes, see, Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Ronald G. Smith (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1958).

adept at silence and absence.

All of the preceding is of crucial value in understanding and appreciating the nuanced level at which the reading and writing of spirituality functions. It suggests that the reading and writing of spirituality is an enticement towards the hidden presence of reality that becomes ever more focused through the echolocation of its elusive presence/absences. In this sense, the felt absence of reality is a facilitator towards the embrace of the ever present silent presence that enables the discovery and uncovering of the ultimate ground of that reality. The presence/absence is the spiral of the dance through which and within which the spirit hides but is simultaneously sensed to be hiding. One senses that the two belong together and will always belong together because the nature of reality suggests that nothing is without this interpenetrative dance of presence through absence. As idealistic, impossible and unreachable as it may be, the emulation of this interpenetrative dance of presence/absence is what the reading and writing of spirituality is seeking participation in. What allows for the possibility of its realization is the capacity of silence to create both the plane and sense through which the various juxtapositions of presence and absence, the visible and invisible, may be properly and harmoniously resolved.

To a large degree, the cultivation of silence in spirituality writing is trying to partake of those same qualities of absence/presence that arise from our encounter with the largesse of reality. This cultivation is not primarily that of a wordless silence but rather of a nuanced, qualitative and practiced unsaying. The process may be compared to the cultivation of an art such as drawing or painting which tries to capture the essence of an aspect of reality so that the representational artifact becomes itself a mode of the recollection of the real. How to achieve this with as little material as possible is the artistic goal underlying all creativity. Creativity in this sense is not reproduction or copying. Reality itself cannot be reproduced or duplicated but only celebrated in a participative movement of the

creative impetus. Such a celebration succeeds where an artifact entices and fuels further participation and creativity.

Both reading and writing meet and impact each other through the re-perceived ground of silence. Silence, as previously explored, is that mode and quality through which all presence is finally apprehended for what it is, as an encounter with an intimate absent other which grounds all reality. Only through this qualitative silence do we speak to and hear the spirit. Presence, reality, words, remain what they previously were, but are now seen for what they ultimately are, fabrications and constructs through which the invisible dances in order to caress and touch the depths of the visible. The art of the creativity of spirituality is to cultivate an innate sensitivity to this hidden dance of spirit through presence and absence. This takes place through the ascendance of a particular kind of silence which may only be described as a speaking silence or a contemplative silence. From this, *writing spirituality* becomes the inscription of contemplative silence through the mode of words, voice, tone, cadence. *Reading spirituality* becomes the transcription of spirit into further inscriptions of the creative impetus, whether into life or artifact. Like the nature of spirit, the dance of textual spirituality takes place through a mutual cultivation of appearance and disappearance, emptiness and fullness, presence and absence. The tactile sense of what remains in and out of this dance, is all we can garner.

Intersect

To whatever extent spirituality may be realized to be the process of interfacing with the invisible aspect of reality, it is still something that needs to be outworked within the context of visible reality. This study is therefore incomplete in terms of how the preceding explorations concerning the reading, writing and praxis of textual spirituality relate to other visible constructs of the human

context. More centrally, this study's concern is with the relevancy and import of spirituality texts within the educational and academic context. The preceding therefore needs to be evaluated in light of that issue. It goes without saying that the spiritual approach to writing and reading can function quite freely outside of the academic context. If anything, the continued growth of mystical, spiritual and related media within the general population is an indication that spirituality has already transcended the boundaries and strictures of the academic demarcation of a discipline. The challenge is therefore more accentuated in terms of how and where lines of understanding and mutual deepening may be drawn in-between the wider forms of spirituality and the academy. The attractiveness of the spiritual and of its continued growth and survival seems assured. Much however needs to be explored in terms of how spirituality can still function within the academy while retaining its wider base. This is the central issue that will be of concern within the ensuing and concluding chapter.

5

TRANS/POSITIONS: Between Academy and Spirituality

This chapter is an overall evaluation and conclusion for the study. It examines aspects of the argument for textual spirituality and what it entails for the academic study of spirituality. The discussions centre around the disciplinary contexts of textual spirituality and spirituality in general; the inter-textual dynamics between spirituality texts and texts about spirituality; the proper orientations necessary for studying spirituality; and the overall import and ramifications of the study. A concluding section points to other avenues for cultivating the spiritual sense.

Retrospects

While discursive in nature, this study is also a juxtaposition of two distinct approaches to writing. The central section is occupied by a text whose primary intent is not discursive but rather affective. The goal is the dissemination of the spiritual sense through the vehicle of the text using the formats of the poetic, the narrative and the thematic/intuitive. On the other hand, the margin sections of the study, parts one and two, are aimed at the discursive clarification of various components of textual spirituality, primarily writing and reading. What the study has done therefore, is create an immediate tension between writing and reading spirituality on the one hand and writing about or thinking about spirituality. This juxtaposition makes it quite clear what it is that has to be considered about the uniqueness of textual spirituality. Part of the goal of the thesis has been to create

clear demarcations between these textual approaches. It goes without saying that the ground that exists between academic discourse and textual spirituality can easily be confused. The tensed edges and the discords that exist between them can easily be made less discomfiting. The usual approach would be to make the spirituality text *appear* more discursive and academic while hiddenly striving for the affective presence called for in writing spirituality. What is usually lost in such a resolution is precisely that which this study wants to bring to the fore, namely the untethered approach and impress of a text whose primary goal is internal spiritual presence. Because this study is aimed at making the basis for this textual approach clear, the conventional tendency to hide the uniqueness of textual spirituality has been minimized. The central section of the study is therefore free of these tendencies although located in a discursive study. By this independence, the text helps make clear the argument of the thesis, namely the uniqueness of the textual nature of spirituality and what that uniqueness entails for the overall study of spirituality, whether as an academic pursuit or as a process of personal formation.

Depending on what aspect of this study one places value on, the discursive or the textual spiritual, two things hold. If value is being placed on the discursive clarification of what the cultivation of the textual spiritual sense entails, then along a vertical axis with discourse at the top and the textual spiritual sense at the bottom, the graphical representation of this study would likely represent an inverse bell curve peaking at the margins. If however the derivation of the textual spiritual sense is what one is after, then mostly likely, a bell curve peaking at the middle would ensue. What the variance would be between these graphical representations would be illustrative of how fluidly one is able to traverse and be comfortable with both textual formats.

Depending on how much deliberate emphasis has been placed within a text to function as a spirituality text, the variance between the discursive and the

spiritual may be large or negligible. In some cases, especially cases where the textual spiritual sense is being accessed indirectly, the lines of demarcation between the two approaches may be minimal or non-existent. That is, one would find it difficult to separate what constitutes the discursive and what constitutes the textual spiritual. This is important to point out so that the overall offering of this study may be put into proper perspective. What bears bearing in mind is that the variance between the two textual approaches has been deliberately expanded so that the main argument and impetus of the study may be made clear. This is not to say that the discursive approach could not have been utilized as vehicle for the textual spiritual, only that a much more clearly 'spiritual' format was better suited for demonstrative purposes. With this overall backdrop in mind, ensuing discussions concerning the impacts of the textual spiritual as contrasted with the discursive/academic can be more clearly worked out.

Inter/disciplines

To a large extent, the writing and reading of spirituality may be ascribed to be an aesthetic and artistic endeavour. While sufficiently accurate, there are some aspects about textual spirituality that stand out and need to be recognized as unique to the genre. What is helpful here is that the artistic and the aesthetical are sufficiently well-articulated frameworks through which spirituality in its disciplinary sense may be considered and evaluated. This is important for at least a basic mutual understanding of what the untethered study of textual spirituality would entail in an academic context.

The term 'aesthetics' is one of those amorphous terms that always needs qualification. There are at least two dimensions of the term that need to borne in mind. In addition, there are other forms of expression that may be qualified with the adjective 'aesthetics', for example, psychological aesthetics, scientific

aesthetics, visual aesthetics, and so forth. The latter adjectival senses of aesthetics do not concern us here, only perhaps with the exception of what may be labeled 'textual aesthetics'. The two basic demarcations that have to be borne in mind when the term 'aesthetics' is used have to do with the distinction between philosophical aesthetics and experiential aesthetics. Philosophical aesthetics as the term suggests, has to do with the philosophical study of the aesthetical. As explained by Monroe Beardsley, its central role is meta-critical, that is, it is an area of philosophy that deals with the "philosophical problems that arise when we make statements about works of art and other aesthetic objects".¹ The goal, according to Louis Reid, is the clarification of language in order to enable sharper perception and articulation.² This is a well developed area of philosophy with a vast and intricate system of analysis and study. What is misleading about 'aesthetics' as a field of study is that much of the dialogue occurring within it hardly qualifies as aesthetical since it is programmatic and problematic in orientation. There is therefore a need to distinguish this area of philosophy from the much more pervasive and accessible experience and apprehension of the aesthetical. It is in this latter sense that 'aesthetics' refers much more directly to the source of the impress of various kinds of artistic works upon the perceptual faculties of the observer/responder. The aesthetical is therefore the 'unmoved mover' behind artistic works. It suggests itself to be something of primordial significance and as existing prior to any process of 'artifecture'.

All art, in its quintessential sense, has to do with the unmasking of the primordial source of the aesthetical, getting in touch with it in an immediate manner. The problem is that this aesthetical cannot be viewed and encountered directly, only through a form of artistic agency. All arts, to various extents, are

1. Monroe C. Beardsley, "Aesthetic Theory and Educational Theory", in *Aesthetic Concepts and Education*, ed. Ralph A. Smith (Urbana/Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1970), 3.

2. See, Louis A. Reid, "Aesthetics and Aesthetic Education", in *The Study of Education and Art*, ed. Dick Field & John Nenick (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), 164.

therefore merely bridges that enable one to reach the invisible, silent, speechless domain of the aesthetic.³ To the extent that these bridges disappear, or enable one to forget their tenuousness or lack thereof, to this extent do they succeed in facilitating access to the aesthetic. What this aesthetic does, is then provide clues and hints as to its nature, its reality and non-reality. At bottom, as Ozenfant lucidly points out, the arts are dealing with mystery, and art becomes “the rendering perceptible of mystery.”⁴ Myriad variations upon a theme ensue, like streams and rivulets after desert rain. They all point seaward, but do not reveal their point of entry. The arts, in their myriad forms, are therefore central and not peripheral to our derivation and sense of the meaning of existence. This function is, I think, very well articulated by Gadamer and has to do with whole-making, being able to perceive the ‘holy order of things’:

The experience of the beautiful, and particularly the beautiful in art, is the invocation of a potentially whole and holy order of things, wherever it may be found. . . . The significant thing is precisely the variety of this experience, which we know as a historical reality as much as a contemporary one. Amidst the variety of art, this same message of *the whole* addresses us over and over again. Indeed, this seems to provide a more precise answer to our question concerning the significance of art and beauty. This means that in any encounter with art, it is not the particular, but rather the totality of the experienceable world, man’s ontological place in it, and above all his finitude before that which transcends him, that is brought to experience.⁵

The domain of art is therefore quite large, and suggests itself as the primary, if not the only mode, by which we can access the meaning giving but invisible aspects of reality. Education is simply the slow and gradual process of becoming familiar with the various means by which the artistic impetus for whole-making is informed and

3. See, Elliot W. Eisner, *Educating Artistic Vision* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 9-12. See also, Harold Osborne, “The Aesthetic in Education and Life”, in *The Aesthetic in Education*, ed. Malcolm Ross (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1985), 93-94.

4. Ozenfant, *Foundations of Modern Art*, trans. John Rodker (New York: Dover Publications, [1931] 1952), 289.

5. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, trans. Nicholas Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 32-33, emphasis added.

facilitated. One may therefore speak of an 'aesthetic education' or of the 'aesthetic in education'.⁶ This role of the aesthetic in education is not merely a tack-on to educational curriculum, but is rather like the underlying hum, to paraphrase Gadamer, of the 'holy order of things' which is hidden from immediate perception by the cacophony of individual subjects which occupy the active frame of the educational enterprise. The aesthetic in education is that transfusive element which brings coherent meaning and purposefulness to the educational process quite apart from any economic or moral justification. It exists only because inherent to the human perception we call education, are various tonal and melodic harmonics, structure, resonances of affirmation, order out of apparent chaos.

This whole paradigmatic scheme is the background context in which the study, cultivation and examination of textual spirituality takes place. To be very clear, the textual study of spirituality is only an aspect of the vastly diverse artistic paradigms that obtain within life and education. What I have tried to do here is sketch the larger and outer concentric circles that properly locate the textual study of spirituality within this larger scheme. The key argument is that textual spirituality in its academic and disciplinary sense is primarily of an artistic nature, and is derived from the aesthetic in its experiential and primordial sense. The uniqueness of spirituality, which also highlights its salient advantageous feature, is that it identifies this primordial experiential aesthetic quite simply and succinctly with spirit. As argued throughout this study, spirit is that aspect from which all sense of reality, the visible and invisible, derives ultimate significance.

The claim being made by this study is that access to the spiritual or using the immediately preceding terminology, the primordial aesthetic, may be obtained through exposure to textual works. This proximity of the textual to the aesthetic spiritual is something that may be actively cultivated, as for example in the process

6. See for example, Louis A. Reid, "Aesthetics and Aesthetic Education"; Harold Osborne, "The Aesthetic in Education and Life".

of writing, through a process of listening, attunement and receptivity to what the writer comes to identify as the sound, voice and cadence of the spiritual. Further, one may, more inactively, obtain the same sense of proximity through the process of reading. The second and fourth chapters of this study have made clear the multiple levels that both writer and responder need to be receptive to in order to properly facilitate this process.

There are certain key markers that ensue from this for what may be described as 'the study of textual spirituality' within the academy. First, the primary goal of textual spirituality is the cultivation of the primordial aesthetic or interchangeably, spirit, within textual works. Second, the key processes by which this textual sense of spirit is derived are through the processes of writing and reading, roughly using the rubric presented in this study. Third, the spiritual aesthetical by being invisible, is not thereby rendered intangible. It remains quite capable of having an impactful impress upon oneself either as artist or alternatively as responder. Fourth, the cultivation of the spiritual sense from textual works does not confine itself to textuality but gradually expands to become a general disposition towards one's outlook on life and one's innate awareness of such silent processes as inform life. Fifthly, it points towards an ultimate horizon of meaning that marries into one harmonious whole the visible and invisible aspects of reality through the mode and agency of spirit.

While the textual examination and cultivation of spirituality as ascribed in this study is quite definitely artistic, the study of spirituality in general, is much more difficult to circumscribe. What I would like to suggest here is a possible disciplinary identity for spirituality as a natural extension of what this study has argued. While it is a very cogent argument and the one that seems to presently have currency, the study of spirituality does not really belong to the discipline of

the humanities.⁷ The primary point of demarcation is that spirituality has a distinctly trans-human aspect (spirit) that the humanities either tend to ignore or downplay. For this reason and given that the humanities primarily centre on the human aspect of perception, the study of spirituality would be severely curtailed within such a framework. Other possible disciplinary avenues are of course the religious ones, theology, religious studies, and the inter-faith dialogue.⁸ All these have some positive aspects that highlight what is already acknowledged within spirituality. Their general shortcoming are the dogmatic formulations that tend to be attendant to religious viewpoints. These, without too much variation, tend to be inflexible and trenchant so that other perspectives are severely curtailed. For this reason, spirituality does not suggest itself to be primarily a religious discipline, that is, when religion is interpreted in its conventional and parochial sense.

If there is one central element that should be highlighted about spirituality and consequently the academic study of spirituality, then the ideas of integration, whole-making and unitive oneness, stand out. Spirituality is primarily about becoming whole, finding and attaining that place where the largesse of reality, usually demarcated into the visible and invisible, begins to form a harmonious interrelated whole. If any discipline is going to be able to properly support and enable research and discourse about spirituality, it must contain this central undertow. Within the education field there are some authors addressing what they view as the unhealthy absence of the spiritual within education. A promising solution being argued for by these authors is that education curriculum must

7. See for example, the arguments presented by the following authors: Daniel A. Helminiak, *The Human Core of Spirituality: Mind as Psyche and Spirit* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996); Donald Evans, *Spirituality and Human Nature* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993).

8. For representative arguments, see the following: Juan-Lorenzo Hinojosa, *Method in the Study of Spirituality*, Ph.D. dissertation (Berkeley, Ca.: Graduate Theological Union, 1984); Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality and History: Questions of Interpretation and Method* (New York: Crossroad, 1992); Sandra Schneiders, "Theology and Spirituality: Strangers, Rivals, or Partners?", *Horizons* 13.2 (1986), 253-274.

become holistic.⁹ Various ways in which education as a whole can become more holistic are proffered. The procedures suggested do not centrally concern us here, but they generally involve the reconstitution of educational curriculum and in some arguments, its total abrogation. Generally, in my view, the revamping of the whole educational curriculum seems a huge undertaking, something akin to tearing down a mountain in order to put up another one. What I would like to suggest here, especially in college/university settings, is the organization of a parallel disciplinary area that may go under the identification of Holistic Studies. This is the disciplinary context where spirituality would properly fit. One can even envisage the gradual replacement of 'spirituality' as an academic term with the term 'holistic'. Holistic Studies would be that area of study where 'the whole' is always in view in the process of whatever is being studied. In this sense, it would be trans-disciplinary in outlook, and so seeking to accommodate those dimensions of human life that have to do with mystery and ultimacy (the invisible) and also those aspects that have to do with the physical realm (the visible). Following on from what has been presented above, the central tenor of Holistic Studies would be artistic, because, to reiterate, the arts are the best modes of expression we have for fluidly engaging both the visible and invisible aspects of reality. Holistic Studies would therefore be fluid in nature, able to accommodate the apparently divergent viewpoints of, for example, the scientific, the philosophical, the literary, the poetic, the mystical. The central goal in the process of analysis would be the construction, for the subject or topic in review, of what may be understood as its holistic spectrum or view of the whole. That is, Holistic Studies would not simply be interdisciplinary, but rather as the term suggests, would be 'holistic' for the

9. See, John D. Miller, *The Holistic Curriculum*, rev. ed. (Toronto: OISE Press, 1996); James Moffett, *The Universal Schoolhouse: Spiritual Awakening Through Education* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1994); David W. Jardine, "To Dwell with a Boundless Heart: On the Integrated Curriculum and the Recovery of the Earth", chp. in *To Dwell with a Boundless Heart: Essays in Curriculum Theory, Hermeneutics, and The Ecological Imagination* (New York: Peter Lang, 1998).

particular course of study. The goal would not simply be to accommodate divergent disciplines, but rather to look at the whole spectrum of address that a subject or topic accesses. Clearly, some subjects or topics would be more comfortably holistic than others, and those would be the ones that would form the core of the discipline. Needless to say, there is much more that could be detailed about how the disciplinary area of Holistic Studies could be constructed and effected, however, to do so here would take me too far afield from the central theme of this study. It would therefore seem prudent to leave such an effort for a more focused analysis where the relevant details could be worked out. What I have done however, is simply make a start concerning the disciplinary identity of spirituality and how it may be placed in order to properly function in an academic context.

Inter/texts

The whole notion of textual spirituality as argued in this study very quickly bogs down if a very simple and basic understanding is not held in view. What needs to be clearly set in view is the distinctiveness of what spirituality texts are. As set out in this study, spirituality texts are those texts whose intent and/or internal function is the inscription of the affective presence of the spiritual. The goal is the creation of what may be recognized by the reader/responder as the presence of spirit. It is texts that achieve this realization that this study has argued should be identified as "spirituality texts". What this means is that the identification of spirituality texts is primarily internal rather than external. That is, it is not primarily the subject or the format of address that determines the identification, but rather the text's internal display of spiritual presence.

The first and most basic requirement concerning the textual awareness of spirituality is to therefore make a demarcation between spirituality texts and other

texts. 'Other texts' would include texts that may be *about* spirituality. By way of illustration, parts one and three of this study would fall under the category of texts *about* spirituality and therefore would not immediately qualify to be labeled 'spirituality texts'. On the other hand, the text in part two is from a deliberate attempt to write spirituality. In this sense, it would qualify for *consideration* as a spirituality text. There is a qualifier attached because it not simply the intent to presence the sense of spirit within a text that engenders the labeling of a text as a spirituality text. The intent has to be successful in accessing the region of spirit through the textual presentation. Adding to this process of identification, are texts whose central purposes may not be overtly spiritual, but which for whatever combination of factors, are realized to be functioning as spirituality texts. Such texts would quite properly be considered spirituality texts even though their stated purpose may be scientific, artistic, philosophical, poetic, historical, biographical, and so forth.

Notwithstanding the accidental exceptions, what this study has argued for, especially for the academic concourse of spirituality studies, is for a deliberateness in the cultivation of the spiritual within written texts. Within the academy, the dissemination and assimilation of ideas is largely carried out through the reading and writing disciplines. If at all spirituality as an academic pursuit is to succeed in articulating what it is centrally concerned about, it must therefore be able to argue for and demonstrate this process using the two central methodologies of academic study, that is, reading and writing. If the spiritual sense is not or cannot be demonstrated through these key disciplines, the study of spirituality will continue to be viewed through an abstract of ideas that would not facilitate entrance into the reality of what those ideas pertain to. Such an abstract approach would not be able to sustain the hunger and intent of spirituality students. The textual approach is therefore of a crucial nature because it occupies such a central academic role for traversing any subject. It is also of import because it is the general initial approach

used outside of the academy for anyone interested in learning about a new subject. In both contexts, it becomes the approach that can either light the spark of the flame of study or totally smother it. However, it bears pointing out that there are other valid approaches besides the textual through which the spiritual sense may be cultivated.¹⁰

There is something else that obtains within the academy that is of consequence for spirituality students. Generally, this ensues from the standardized approach to writing academic papers and the process of the evaluation of such papers. Although a spirituality student may be studying, assimilating and coming to value texts such as *The Tao Te Ching*, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, or texts by authors such as Thomas Merton, Sam Keen, Annie Dillard, Frederick Buechner and others, that same student is either implicitly or indirectly discouraged from cultivating similar textual approaches in writing. If students do make the attempt, they are usually penalized through an evaluation process linked to some symbol or number grading system. Unless a student improvises or finds another avenue for cultivating textual spirituality, what is likely to result is a growing sense of frustration and disillusionment about the studying process and even the spiritual quest.

Possible redresses. A start may be the creation of courses of study within the academy that may have descriptors like, 'art and spirituality', 'textual spirituality', 'spiritual poetics' and so forth, where the cultivation of sensitivity to textual spirituality may be explored and where this is understood to be an artistic process and therefore to be evaluated accordingly. Using this approach, spirituality studies would join the other arts in struggling with how personal interpretations of art are to be evaluated. An excellent resource for how this might be done is David Aspin's article, "Assessment and Evaluation in the Arts".¹¹ Questions of technique are

10. See the last section of this chapter for further discussion.

11. David Aspin, "Assessment and Evaluation in the Arts", in *The Aesthetic Imperative: Relevance and Responsibility in Arts Education*, ed. Malcolm Ross, 25-52 (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1981).

assumed to already be understood by the student, so the central issue would be the artistic and creative use of those techniques in the creation of spirituality texts or to use another term, works of art. In such artistically focused spirituality courses, the two approaches of study would be the textual appreciation of spirituality texts and the creation of original works in similar vein. For example, Act I, in the preceding part of this study would be an example of a text that could be offered in such spirituality courses. The poetic approach works very well here because it is probably the most fluid textual form that allows for originality and creativity and the affective cultivation of spirit. The only qualifier that would need to be made clear for students is that the goal is not formatic poetry as such, but rather the employment of poetic forms in order to achieve what textual spirituality is after, namely the affective presence of spirit within the text. This form of the exploration of textual spirituality is key if spirituality is going to succeed in highlighting quite clearly what it is after as a genre, that is, a genre that is not simply about poetic writing or creative writing, but about the realization of the spiritual.

Another academic approach for facilitating textual spirituality is the requirement for what is generally called 'reflective writing' within courses where spirituality topics are being studied. Usually this is described as the submission of personal reflections about the offering of the course, books read, etc. The problem is that this general description generally leads to the false idea that only what is personal qualifies as textual spirituality. The other attendant confusion is the equating of the attempt to write spiritually *with* writing spirituality. The tendency is to lean towards the former, usually resulting in writing that one would generally find under the rubric of inspirational, anecdotal, moral and similar labels. Notwithstanding these hazards, if used creatively by a spirituality student, 'reflective writing' may actually provide a context for cultivating the textual spiritual within academic contexts that may not be as open to the idea of textual

spirituality. Unfortunately, in such contexts, such course requirements are generally viewed as easy writing and easy marks rather than as essential vehicles for attuning oneself to the sense of the presence of spirit in the educational process. Perhaps changing the descriptor from 'reflective writing' to 'creative writing' or 'original writing' in spirituality courses might facilitate both the need for personal reflection and the need for creative originality necessary for textual spirituality. Under that umbrella, textual presentations such as that offered in Act III above, would have a much readier audience because they would be seen much more clearly for what they are, personal and creative testaments of the spiritual quest. Again, the overall undertow would be the striving for spirit through the textual presentation.

Something that might go a long way in anchoring the textual exploration of spirituality is the building of a repertoire of textual spiritual sources, an ascribed and growing bibliography for cultivating the textual spiritual. There are already examples, previously noted, of bibliographical sources for spirituality studies.¹² The only problem with these is that they tend to be subject oriented, and to therefore be focused on the external understanding and interpretation of spirituality. That is, they largely highlight those texts that are written from the religious perspective. Another pervasive problem, other than this religious orientation, is the bias towards archaic, ancient, and classical sources as representative of the core of the spirituality bibliography.¹³ Generally, rather than being seen as representative of forms that can be cultivated and worked out by contemporary authors, such archaic texts become surrounded by various papers and annotations thus placing

12. See; Thomas Moore, ed., *The Education of the Heart* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996); Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, eds., *Spiritual Literacy: Reading the Sacred in Everyday Life* (New York: Scribner, 1996); Eugene H. Peterson, *Take and Read - Spiritual Reading: An Annotated List* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1996).

13. See for example the extensive list of "spirituality" texts published under the general title *The Classics of Western Spirituality: A Library of the Great Spiritual Masters*.

them strictly within the academic orbit, cordoned off by words such as 'classic', 'ancient', 'medieval'. Consequently, there are hardly any representative contemporary texts that are highlighted in the academy, nor is there any encouragement given for contemporary explorations. The best way of redressing these shortcomings is the building of a personal bibliography of spirituality texts attuned to one's own sense of the textual spiritual.

Overall, what textual spirituality must strive for is to not be scuttled way into marginalized commentary in various other subjects such as literature, poetry, theology, history, religion. This diffusion of the spiritual across subject disciplines is what generally now exists. This lack of a focused address is a constant frustration for students of spirituality. What a perceptive student of spirituality winds up doing is cultivating a running internal dialogue and an attuned contemplative awareness to the spiritual in very diverse disciplines and subjects. If this attentive contemplative posture becomes second nature, a student not only gains a sensory system for readily recognizing diverse sources and works of the textual spiritual, he or she also gains a lifelong faculty for cultivating the sense of the spiritual. Nonetheless, it would be much better for spirituality students if the textual spiritual is centrally and uniquely recognized within the academy. Hopefully this study will facilitate such recognition.

Orientations

The pre-understanding orientations of students (and teachers) in the studying of spirituality and spirituality texts is of a crucial aspect. There are essentially three dimensions that a student needs to be properly oriented to in order to properly examine and consider what spirituality is and what it is after. These may be viewed as concentric circles around a point. Alternatively, they may be viewed as levels of reference that link the universal with the particular. What

needs to be remembered however, is that these are merely aids for locating oneself within the spiritual quest. Such demarcations do not properly exist and what one should aim for is an easy and fluid sense of identification through the various levels of orientation.

The first level of orientation, and also the most universal, has to do the essential co-unitive oneness of reality through the energetic dynamic we call spirit. There are many ways of expressing this and it does not really matter how it is said as long as the central idea of unitive inter-connectedness is grasped. What follows from this is the total breakdown of a separate objective observational reality. The only mode of exploration and understanding is of a participative and engaged involvement. What one gradually finds as spirituality is explored, is that one is intimately involved in the very ground of being that one is seeking to reach. That is, the finding of the source of reality also involves finding oneself. At its most expansive, spirituality therefore involves a mystical resolution. Various terms have been used to describe this resolution. Terms like 'mystical union', 'enlightenment', 'awakening', 'annihilation', 'thou art that', are all ways of perceiving what it is that takes place as the spiritual quest approaches the absolute ground of being *and* non-being. Although some of these terms give the impression that the culmination is of something achieved, the testimonies of mystics and other spiritual sojourners are not of achievement but of realization, of an opening of the understanding to something that was always there and with which one was always engaged with but without conscious awareness of. The study of spirituality in its various guises is a process of uncovering this hidden ground of reality and gradually comporting oneself to it.

How the universal connectedness of reality applies to spirituality is something that is increasingly being put forward as a basis for revisioning education and the academy. Among the different authors that are calling for a reorientation of education towards the sense of the universal, perhaps James

Moffett's thesis is the most radical, and most incisive.¹⁴ Moffett takes quite seriously and literally, that each individual's life on Earth is of a transcendent purpose. He sees such purpose as related to something that may be described as 'soul growth' or 'soul development'. The Earth becomes a 'soul school' whose processes have universal reference and impact. What ensues from this distinctive purview is a highly revisionistic scheme for how education should be carried out. According to Moffett, present forms of education with their focus on "education for making a living", largely work against the necessary development of personal consciousness.¹⁵ In others words, educational approaches are inverse to the ultimate goals of life and the soul. By beginning from ends, they tend to place themselves in antagonistic positions against the very processes that make life possible. The process of the recovery of proper orientation would therefore involve the conscious inclusion in education of increasingly larger frames of reference - from personal consciousness to social consciousness and ultimately to organic forms of cosmos consciousness.¹⁶ The other authors arguing for the reorientation of education from essentially the same premise as Moffett are John Miller and David Jardine.¹⁷ For both Miller and Jardine, the process of recovery can be coalesced around the perennial theme of the interrelatedness of all things, and more centrally, the organic interrelatedness we call Earth.

What Moffett and the other writers are stressing about the study of spirituality, and education in general, is that without a sense of comportment to what may be described as 'what ultimately matters', education, spiritual or otherwise, will serve no lasting purpose. Without such an overarching purpose,

14. See, James Moffett, *The Universal Schoolhouse: Spiritual Awakening Through Education* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1994). See also, John D. Miller, *The Holistic Curriculum*, rev. ed. (Toronto: OISE Press, 1996).

15. Ibid., 10.

16. See, ibid., 3 and part one of the text for an expansion of these ideas. See also chapter fourteen.

17. See, John D. Miller, *The Holistic Curriculum*; David W. Jardine, "To Dwell with a Boundless Heart".

education will be directionless or will substitute parodies of significance that turn out to be opposed to the processes of life and therefore to be ultimately destructive. The anchor that is needed for education, and for spirituality in particular, is the understanding that education is primarily for 'spiritual formation' or to paraphrase Moffett's thesis, 'soul growth'. This does not mean that the education does not have practical significance and physical application, it only means that such practical expressions are seen as transitional to what each student would ascribe to be of ultimate significance and final meaning: God, Spirit, Tao.

The second level of proper orientation for a spiritual education has to do with contextual elements - social, cultural, religious, educational, that the student of spirituality finds him/herself prescribed by and impacted by. It is these aspects that form the nexus that the student has to grapple with in trying to make sense of what the spiritual means in one's particular life context. This orientation essentially consists of trying to find harmony and meaning in contexts that might provide one with opposing or parallel viewpoints of how the spiritual is to be understood and pursued. This level of orientation may therefore be understood to be a gradual diffusion of the universal into what may be described as 'one's neighbourhood'. For the student of spirituality, education becomes the significant arena through which one begins to understand how one is to be oriented within one's socio-cultural context. The debate concerning how spirituality relates to this socio-educational matrix is also generating a lot of debate. Generally the writers working in this sphere of spirituality studies are arguing for what may crudely be described as the spiritualization of education.¹⁸ They are primarily concerned with the pedagogical implications of spirituality. That is, their concern is with the

18. See, Parker J. Palmer, *To Know as We are Known: A Spirituality of Education* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983); Marilyn J. Llewellyn, *Bringing Forth a World: Spirituality as Pedagogy*, Ph.D. diss. (Cincinnati, Ohio: Union Institute Graduate College, 1998); Iris M. Yob, "Spiritual Education: A Public School Dialogue with Religious Interpretations", *Religious Education* 90.1 (1995), 104-117; Rosemarie Carfagna, "A Spirituality of Teaching", *Studies in Formative Spirituality* 9.2 (1988), 141-150.

learning/teaching dispositions that facilitate the presence of spirituality within education and consequently, general society. The state of the debate of this literature is very well summarized in the doctoral dissertation by Robert Kirk.¹⁹ Basically, what the student of spirituality has to keep in mind for this perspective, is that there is no spirituality apart from a particularized context. This does not mean that context determines spirituality, an easy mis-evaluation to make, but rather that spirituality has to be lived out through the nexus of the particulars of geography, language, culture, family. The proper orientation is not to seek to abrogate these details or to seek to transcend them as socio-cultural constructs which impinge on one's practice and understanding of spiritual life, but rather to weave them into the fabric of meaning that has spirit at its centre.

While the universal and socio-cultural contexts are much wider orbits of orientation for studying spirituality, none of them can properly function without the facilitation of the student's own internal orientation. It is this orientation that is the fulcrum around which the other aspects of the study and praxis of spirituality turn. That is, the internal spiritual orientation co-inheres and traverses the larger orbits. What makes this possible is the nature of the hidden ground of reality which has been ascribed to be spirit. That is, spirit is not an isolated transcendent ground of reality, but is also an intimate, authenticating and impactive source of being. It is at this level that the spiritual/universal orientation is culminated, nowhere else. In some sense, the spiritual quest may be seen as the process of expanding spiritual consciousness through various orbits of spiritual reference, all of it cohering and harmonizing through the inner fulcrum of the individual. The oft repeated admonition that the precious jewel of realization is within oneself essentially points to this understanding. The internal orbit of reference therefore becomes not only the space where meaning and questions of

19. See, Robert deVille Kirk III, *Spirituality and Education: A Conceptual Analysis*, Ph.D. diss. (University of Connecticut, 2000).

the spiritual quest are worked out, but also the space where one encounters the hidden ground of being which turns out to not be somewhere out there, but rather to be buried deep within oneself, under layers of names, frames, references, and intents. But not only this, such meaningful depth is also simultaneously realized to be everywhere. The hidden ground of being is discovered to be 'another' and another can be plant, blade of grass, planet, star, child, spouse. Stories of laughter at the mystical resolutions of various spiritual sojourners are a representation of this dawning of understanding, also described by many sojourners as an awakening. It is a gradual, but sometimes sudden, realization, that there is only one activity, one *doing*, throughout all the universe and that that activity and doing, can only be described by the word — *love*.

Although brief, the preceding makes clear the basic levels of spiritual orientation that a student of spirituality is continually accessing in the cultivation and exploration of the spiritual sense, textual or otherwise. All of the orbits are essential, and none should be neglected. The overall goal for the student is the development of a fluid capacity to function at all three levels of the spiritual spectrum, to be at harmony, peace, equilibrium, throughout all the visible and invisible aspects of reality.

Ramifications

There are certain key issues that this study has pointed towards concerning textual spirituality and spirituality and how these impact the academy. The first aspect has to do with the scale of address. Quite clearly, the domain of spirituality extends much farther and wider than the academy can encompass. In many ways, spirituality can be argued to be co-extensive with life. As far as spirituality is concerned, no demarcation can be placed between academic pursuits and the impacts and imports of those upon the dynamic processes that make life possible.

Academic pursuits therefore have to take place within a biological, cosmological and spiritual context, in a few words, they have to be authentic to the whole of life and existence. What spirituality highlights is the necessity of harmoniously interweaving the various pursuits of the human enterprise into a singular fabric of existence.

Secondly, as a consequence of its holistic and pervasive outlook, spirituality presents itself as a challenge to the objectivity oriented methodologies of academic exploration and investigation. What this challenge represents is the necessity of being able to live with integrity, meaning and purpose *without* having all the answers. The wisdom of a mature spirituality requires the need to be at ease with mystery and doubt. This however does not imply passivity. Everything suggests that the mystery and the hidden ground of reality is an entrancing, enticing ground which calls for and even fuels exploration. What it seems to require though is a tentativeness of approach and a nuanced perception, something that leaves its inner mystery intact. Consequently, the centres and certainties of our understanding become shifting horizons which cannot be pinned down with finality. Spirituality is a process of responding to this elusive dance of mystery within and beyond things. It is a way of comporting ourselves to this way of things and the gathering and dissemination of the wisdom we have managed to synthesize in our process of becoming.

Third, spirituality challenges academic tendencies towards specialization. That is, academic approaches favour the fragmentation of perspectives in order to facilitate depth of investigation. Although it is easy to see the rationale of this approach, what spirituality and other similar dissenting voices are announcing is that this kind of approach is a recipe for all kinds of disasters. Not only can results be misleading, they often lead to a false bravado about approaches to take in pursuing the goals they represent. Thus various pursuits of the human enterprise, economic, social, political, technological, or otherwise, are pursued from narrow

perspectives that do not properly take into account the effect upon the whole. Spirituality in general, is arguing for a redress of this pervasive myopia towards what can be termed holistic approaches to all forms of human enterprise. Front and centre in this purview is the inter-connected organic whole we call Earth. All of life depends on this inter-connectivity for its sustenance. Spirituality and other similar movements are therefore calling for forms of thinking and acting that at root see themselves as 'earthical'.

An understanding that this study has highlighted and explored is the general demarcation we place between the visible and invisible aspects of reality. This demarcation is something that needs to be bridged, especially in the academy. This is such a large topic area which can be explored from a number of different perspectives. This study has only considered a very narrow band of the topic, namely that of spirituality in textual form. An influence in the choice of focus has been the inherent interweaving of these in spirituality and the challenge this represents to the academy. It may be easy to be dismissive about the import of this challenge to the well-formed bastion of university and college education, but even a cursory glance at the following is enough to suggest that this is not passing fad, for example, the types of books that are occupying various bestseller lists, various subjects generating media attention (that is apart from the usual run-of-mill bad news press), key speakers and ideas on the seminar circuit, the growth of spirituality/new-age media. In this general milieu, I think that it would be prudent for the academy, and other such well-formed institutions to take an honest look at the key issues fueling this movement. This study is an attempt to do just that, to take an honest look at what spirituality values and strives for in written texts. This has an important impact on the academy for it suggests what aspects of study should be central for a textually derived appreciation of spirituality.

A fifth feature, not generally recognized or downplayed within the academy, is the relevance and importance of the sense of spirit, or to use other

terms, the experience of the numinous, the holy, the transcendent within education. It is this that people from various walks of life are striving to get in touch with, and that they see as lacking or as unacknowledged in predominant cultural institutions. From this search, various alternative movements have arisen, be they philosophical, artistic, scientific, religious, therapeutic and so forth. As far as general academic education is concerned, the cultivation of the awareness of spirit is either ignored or assumed to be something of a personal nature. Unfortunately for spirituality students, it is a very central aspect of their pursuit of study and for many, it may be the very reason that brought them to such academic exploration. Any academic study of spirituality that ignores this aspect is bound to fail in addressing what spirituality students are after. What this study has done is explore one aspect through which the sense of the spiritual so central to the pursuit and practice of spirituality can be cultivated and nourished in the academy. The key features that would be necessary in this process have been explored in chapters two and four of the study. How all of this directly relates to the academy was put forward in chapter one and is also being worked out in this chapter. If spirituality as an academic discipline is going to satisfy what spirituality asserts itself to be, creative approaches which accommodate the spiritual without negating the academic will have to be developed. These can only succeed if spirituality is valued and understood for what it is centrally concerned with.

In wider social purview, the search and quest for spirituality is an assertion that human beings are an interwoven inter-dynamic of spirit and matter. To function strictly on the material ground is to therefore curtail what it means to be human. The study and pursuit of spirituality is a way of finding ways of cultivating the harmonious inter-presence of spirit through the visible forms of reality. The assertion is that spirit, though invisible, is the very ground out of which visible reality arises and is focused by. Various aspects of the development of an intuitive sensitivity are therefore key to having an awareness of the spiritual.

These may be mediated through various formats, but more specifically, those of the arts. Spirituality has a very strong affinity for the artistic process. The distinction however, is that spirituality encompasses not only an external form of expression but also an internal form of expression. The goal is to encompass a dynamic that does not only find expression in physical forms of artistic expression but also in how one understands oneself, how one is as an individual human being. Spirituality is therefore not something that lends itself to compartmentalization. This explains why it is so attractive for those who are seeking various approaches for healing the fragmentations that prevail in contemporary society. Spiritual formation is therefore a running theme whenever spirituality is being explored. Academic explorations of spirituality and education are being urged more and more to take this into account. The argument extends as far as the understanding that each individual's life is an expression of spirit in physical form. This expression is seen as purposeful and as having universal import and significance. The worth of all embodied life extends far beyond any utilitarian value that can be placed on it. Education, be it family, public, religious, cultural, social, can either enhance or undermine the realization of this universal purpose.

As already explored, written texts are of a key role in the educational process. If this aspect of the educational process can be harnessed and linked to something that may be described as the education and awakening of the soul, education may arguably be revolutionized from within. Obviously this cannot be done haphazardly or it would defeat the very purposes for such an approach. A promising avenue is to take an available approach that already contains the seeds for such purpose. The newly arising study of spirituality, though not in its religious sense, fits this need. What is key for this subject area, easy to overlook, is the placement of 'spirit' as a key identifier of what the subject is about. What becomes important in it is the cultivation of the awareness of spirit not only as a mode of being, but also as a mode of creating. The ramifications extend far and wide. What

is gained is the centrality of intuitive awareness as a way of cultivating various sensory systems that human beings have largely ignored, suffocated or undervalued. This may largely have been due to the failure of our scientific understanding to see how various spiritual aspects of reality may be studied and explored. More and more, we are beginning to see that the negation of this key aspect of our humanity has created a blind-spot in many of our pursuits and enterprises. What we gain from the understanding that reality is a fulcrum around which spirit turns in its journey in and through the visible and invisible, is a sense of wholeness, an understanding that there is a bottom aspect to everything. This bottom aspect does not suggest itself to be composed of an objective construct, but rather of a participatory ground to which we are intricately attached and intimately involved. Such ground, breathes in and through us in the creation of the world. It is therefore proper to call it spirit. We are the mold that spirit uses to inspire the world.

What has taken place for several centuries now, is a deliberate ignoring of this key aspect of the creative process. As a result, what we have felt for a long time now and are continuing to feel, are the pangs of antagonism between us and that which grounds us and sustains our reality. In some ways, our ways of thinking and therefore acting, have become obstructive and are blocking the route of the breath of spirit through visibility and invisibility in creating and sustaining reality for us. The sudden surge of a need to return to spirituality out of the various forms of secularism must not be seen as simply a call to try something new, but rather as a desperate call to redress a situation in which our fates are dangerously entwined. All the voices that are beginning to form a crescendo of a call for truer, simpler, and more authentic ways of living, are in some ways the voice of our common aliveness making us aware of our situation. The development of spiritual awareness is therefore key in this recovery. It may be something as simple as recycling or as drastic as withdrawing our support from institutions and

organizations whose inner workings are antagonistic to the life spirit of Earth.

Perhaps a return to the simple but profound questions of long ago may help generate the contemplative spirit we seem to be striving for. Questions of who we are, who put us here, why we are living, why we die, are all forms of contemplative reflection. What we know now is that these questions may finally not have a definitive answer. This does not make them any less important. It only means that the formulations of our thinking and the generation of our answers must also embrace the mystery of their unresolvability. Much of the history of the ideas we have held on to in answer to these questions have been the cause of untold suffering, destructiveness and violence. The situation we now live in is even more precarious. Our neighbours, those we think are different from us, no longer live behind that ridge of mountains, or beyond that ocean. Our Earth is more and more becoming a small village. Various forms of intolerance and inflexibility to the things that matter to all human beings are patterns of thinking and acting that no longer have a local impact but a global impact as well. Quantum physics has revealed to us that the fabric of reality is an inter-connected interaction of the wavular and the particular. The particular affects the wave and the wave affects the particular. These two aspects cannot be separated out from each other. Werner Heisenberg made it clear for us that to try and become more right about one aspect is to consequently become *less* right about the other. Rightness therefore consists of the undivorceable marriage of the two. We cannot be right only in one aspect, we can only be right when we are right at both and the same time. Aspects of acting locally and acting globally relate to this. It is not sufficient to act locally with the view that one is thinking globally. The interrelated fabric of reality suggests that acting locally *is* acting globally. Similarly, acting globally or at a distance that might seem far removed from one's local, *is* acting locally. If anything can be insisted on, it is this, that the world is one singular reality, and that there is no place anywhere within it that is separated from the other. Our success, not only

as a species, but as a planet, hinges on our recognition of this and of our consequent engendering of respect for all forms of life no matter how far removed from us they may seem.

Terminus

A terminus is of course, not only a point of disembarkation, but also a place of embarkation, for other journeys, other modes of transportation to other destinations. The particular journey of this study has been about the spiritual capacities of certain texts to display in their pages what another can come to identify as the presence of spirit. It is something essentially wordless because it traverses the words that may be on the page. It is rather the effect, the tactile sense of something reached, the depth touched. It is a depth whose centre would seem to be located in many places, within the writer/artist, within the reader/responder, within the invisible and visible. The arts, I have argued, are the best means we have for echo-locating this presence of spirit in reality. All of the arts, in this sense, are facilitators for uncovering the holy, the ineffable, making it palpably present so that meaning is made out of existence, gaps between the visible and invisible bridged. Needless to say, the arts of writing and reading spirituality texts are not the only means of cultivating and realizing the sense of the presence of spirit. There are many others which have not been explored in this study that might form a focus for other investigations.

In immediate light of this study, though not so obvious as an artistic form, is the formatting and printing of books. A well written text, even what may be identifiable as a spirituality text, can be ruined by a poor visual presentation. Book printing and publishing are therefore ancillary arts to the cultivation of the textual sense of spirit. I have come across too many books that are simply not enticing to read even though their subject matter may be worthy of attention. There is

therefore something to Roland Barthes thesis of pleasurable texts, of texts that are enticing to read.²⁰ Within the inter-dynamic dance of spirit through the visible and invisible, no aspect should be downplayed. Mundane aspects of visible presentation contribute just as much to the derivation of the largely invisible primordial aesthetic, identified above as spirit. An unexpected congruency in what is being explained here are texts referenced for this study which illustrate very well the intertwining of the visual presentation of a text with the artistic/spiritual goal of the text. These texts are an illustration of the joining of the artistic construction of a book, artistic writing, and the achievement of an artistic/aesthetic sensation, and in one case, the achievement of what I have delineated in this study as textual spirituality. All three examples of the texts are written in the area of fine arts, which would explain their congruency of visual formatting, literary presentation, and aesthetic achievement. Unfortunately, I can only point towards them without being able to duplicate their effect here. A reader will have to seek them out to gather the effect. The first text which in my evaluation also qualifies as a spirituality text, is Philip Rubinov-Jacobson's *Drinking Lightning*.²¹ The second text is by Ozenfant. First published in the English version in 1931, it is a surprisingly lucid, current and readable text. The artistic bent of the author is clearly present throughout.²² The third text is Mark C. Taylor's *Disfiguring*.²³ There are many other texts that achieve similar results, but these, in my view, stand out.

From much of the preceding, including previous chapters of this study, it is clear that the art of cultivating spiritual presence can only be carried out using

20. See, Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, tr. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975).

21. See, Philip Rubinov-Jacobson, *Drinking Lightning: Art, Creativity, and Transformation* (Boston: Shambhala, 2000).

22. See, Ozenfant, *Foundations of Modern Art*, trans. John Rodker (New York: Dover Publications, [1931] 1952).

23. See, Mark C. Taylor, *Disfiguring: Art, Architecture, Religion* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992).

some form of visible artifact. That is, we reach for the invisible through the visible. What becomes key is not so much the construct or artifact used, but rather how it is used. The arts of spirit are therefore as many as there are the number of artists who are working from the longing to reveal something of the invisible depth of spirit. This in essence, is what art amounts to. From this basic premise, all of the arts may be utilized as visible agents in the service of spirit. Poetry, very obviously, can be used this way. So can music, architecture, sculpture, dance, gardening, building, drawing, crafts, painting, singing, photography. These are the obvious ones for they constitute what we normally think of when we think of the word 'arts'.

Other avenues for the cultivation of spirit that are *not* so obvious, but which are just as relevant and capable, can be summed up under a single word, life. In other words, one's whole way of living and being, can be looked at as an artistic endeavour whose aim is the cultivation of spirit. One's life in all its myriad activities becomes in a sense, a canvas for the artistic achievement of spirit. From this view, all the less obvious activities, like cooking, washing dishes, listening to a child, walking to school, all become avenues for the potential entrance of spirit. The avenues for the cultivation of the spiritual sense are therefore quite many. It is however fair to more closely identify them with the more easily identifiable arts such as those listed in the last paragraph. Each one of these art forms, depending on the nature of the primary artifact employed, will provide certain textures of the sensation of spirit. The arts of sculpture will achieve a particular sense, music, a great range of senses depending on musical form. There is therefore a wide range of sensations of spirit that may be gathered. Notwithstanding, what is not being said here is that it is the art form *per sé*, or the artifact itself, which is the immediate cause of spiritual sensation. From what has ensued in this study, the argument is that *certain* ways of utilizing artifacts can yield the sensation of spirit. The challenge to the artist is to work with his or her art form to achieve the result. The

art forms and the artifacts are only facilitators of the artistic urge to capture something of spirit in visible form. It is this dance of spirit through the visible that is the cause of wonder, awe, and inspiration. The whole cosmos is therefore a canvas for the spirit, and we are the audience. Sometimes though, we are moved to create, and when our creation succeeds, it is in the order of spirit.

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