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SPIRITUALITY IN EDUCATION: IN SEARCH OF A UNIFYING THEME

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines traditional and contemporary perspectives on the nature of spirituality. Its aim is to provide a basis for a programme or course on spirituality that would be relevant and meaningful for students in multicultural settings. The main theme unifying the diverse traditions and perspectives examined in the thesis relates to the interconnectivity of all life within the Universe. Other related themes include: the importance of living in the present, the unity between body, spirit, and earth, and the importance of contemplative solitude and silence.

RÉSUMÉ

Cette thèse examine diverses perspectives traditionelles et contemporaines sur la nature de la spiritualité. Son but est d'élaborer une base pour un programme ou un cour sur la spiritualité qui serait pertinent et significatif pour des étudiants dans des milieux multiculturles. Le thème central qui unifie les perspectives presentés est relié a l'interconnectivité de toute vie. D'autres thèmes relatifs renferment: l'importance de vivre le moment présent, l'unité entre le corps, l'esprit et la terre, ainsi que l'importance de la solitude contemplative et le silence.

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INTRODUCTION

There is presently a growing interest throughout North America in spirituality and spiritual life that is broadly based. An example of this concern for spiritual meaning to life is manifested in the New York Times best-seller list of books. Currently, the subject matter of 25 percent of the books listed is a spiritual theme.

Eugene Taylor, in his article, ***Desperately Seeking Spirituality,*** describes the search for spiritual awakening in America. He names this interest in spirituality "The New Awakening." This awakening, according to Taylor, reflects the change in consciousness whereby people are becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the fragmentation of modern life. Rather than being simply a privatistic or self-help movement, he points to examples of concern with personal, social, environmental and even political well-being and transformation. As an example, this concern for spiritual meaning directs people to a "new kind of selflessness and personal commitment to issues related to growth and health" (Taylor, 1994, p. 62)(cf. Keen, 1994).

This interest in spirituality reflects, not only a dissatisfaction with institutionalized religions, but also a sense of spiritual emptiness. As Keen writes (1994), people are thirsting for a life with spiritual depth; that is, with soul, substance, meaning and value (cf. Moore, 1992, p. 5).

In Canada, and particularly in Quebec, this spiritual searching is occurring in conjunction with the recognition that the traditional Judeo-Christian orientation of programmes in moral and religious education does not take into account the reality of multicultural settings. There is a need to reflect the reality of the contemporary student population based on Canada's multiethnic and multicultural society. In Quebec, the Ministry of Education increasingly favours a religious education program of a "cultural type." It proposes a moral education as an alternative to a confessionally based religious program (MEQ, 1984, 1990). In addition, the Superior Court of Quebec has recently ruled for linguistic school boards. Therefore, as a direct result of this ruling, the confessional structure of the present system will soon change to reflect language.

An issue that remains to be examined, however, is the possibility of offering a nonconfessional course, or programme, in spirituality. Given the present cultural context, I believe it is time to examine more closely what the basis for such a programme might be. Is there a common ground that unifies traditional and contemporary perspectives on spirituality? I have been teaching in a public elementary school system for 25 years. Early in my teaching career the children were mostly white Anglo-Saxon Protestants. Currently, the children of Christian persuasion represent a mere 10 percent of the school population where I

teach. The theme of this thesis is anchored on the premise that the content of the present confessional programme no longer relates to the cultural background of the majority of the pupils in class. However, in my classes I find the student's interest in the questions of a spiritual nature still very much alive (cf. Coles, 1990). It is beyond the scope of this thesis to elaborate a full programme in spirituality education. Rather, its aim is to identify themes common to diverse traditional and contemporary perspectives on spirituality. This thesis could eventually serve as the starting point for a programme.

The first chapter of the thesis will examine some traditional perspectives concerning spirituality. The first is Taoism, which, after six thousand years, still offers considerable insight into spirituality. The practice of T'ai-chi-Ch'uan is presented as a way to become rooted to the earth and of incorporating spiritual practices in a person's life. The increase in the number of Asian martial art programmes in North America manifests the interest in spiritual disciplines. The second is the spiritual perspective of the indigenous people of North America, particularly the concern for nature and the environment.

The second chapter will review the work of several contemporary writers on the themes of spirituality and spiritual life. For Parker Palmer, there is a fundamental

need for spirituality in education. He emphasizes the wholeness of life. He stresses the importance of encouraging students to be involved in ways that will connect them to other people in a community and to nature.

Sam Keen focuses on issues of ecology, community, creativity and spirituality. These issues are seen as integral to an education which fosters the creative ability of each student. Ann Morrow Lindbergh presents the concept of meaningful solitude and the importance of leading a centred life amidst the rapid pace of modern living.

The writings of the Zen master, Thich Nhat Hanh, emphasize the importance of meditation as a way to develop a total awareness of the body, mind, senses and the external world. For Hanh, to understand anything or anyone, an individual must first become one with what you want to understand.

Robert Grudin examines the need to be creative to discover inner unity. He suggests changes to the educational systems to enable children to be more aware of their environment and to be original in their work.

Charlene Spretnak examines the importance of a person's religious belief, political awareness and his or her connexion with the Universe. For Spretnak, spirituality is expressed indirectly in a person's oneness with nature

and his or her interaction with all life. Brenda Ueland emphasizes the need for an individual to reach a spiritual plateau in life that will enable his or her creative ability to flourish.

The final chapter is a perspective from the margins. It examines the spiritual meaning of near-death experiences. This chapter will also focus on the spiritual transformations that occur as a result of near-death experiences. The conclusion will discuss educational implications and issues arising.

CHAPTER ONE: TRADITIONAL PERSPECTIVES

1.1 TAOISM

1.1.1 History

Taoism's most influential book, the ***Tao Te Ching,*** or ***The Canon of the Way and its Attainment,*** has traditionally been attributed to the writings of Lao Tzu, a palace secretary of the Imperial Court of China, in approximately 600 BC. Some intellectuals, even today, claim that the book is a product of several contemporary scholars of that period (Creel, 1970, p. 1). To appreciate its message, it is important for one to be aware of the political climate present in China at that time.

The effect of the instability of the monarchy in China, from 600 to 400 BC, was a period of political and immense social turmoil amongst the Chinese peasantry. To prevent the peasants from fighting among themselves, the Chinese philosopher Kong-fu-zi (Confucius) proposed a moral system of ethics that stressed the reverence of ancestors, ancient rituals and ceremonies (Hoff, 1982, p. 2). These teachings emphasized a network of mutual duties binding families, friends and nations. However, they were not effective in changing the social climate in China before the death of Confucius.

Wu Wei, or the doctrine of inaction of the *Tao Te Ching,* is directly opposite to what Confucius prescribed to alleviate the social and human chaos in China nearly twenty-five hundred years ago. To Lao Tzu, the earth is a reflection of heaven, therefore, the same laws must apply. The world is to be seen as a teacher of the lessons to learn and understand. The main lesson relates to the importance of living in harmony (Hoff, 1982, pp. 4, 5).

The Tao Te Ching is not a "how to" book. It provides the guidelines but not the way. This is left to the individual. The path which one follows is, therefore, the responsibility of each pilgrim. Despite the perception of heaven, it should be noted that from a Western perspective, the Taoist philosophy is naturalistic and atheistic because the notion of a god or gods is foreign to it (Chan, 1963, p. 125).

Tao, as the central theme of Taoism, can be explained as a path, a track, a principle, a system or doctrine, or even an order. By any definition, it includes a total unity with the Universe (Barrett, 1993, p. 16). The pilgrims are to seek a pattern that will lead them to peace in the natural world, the social world and the intra-personal world. It is this experience, as the individual finds the universal way, which the Tao alludes to. Hoff (1982)

observes that when you understand and honour your inner nature, you also know where you do not belong (p. 41).

The Way of Chuang Tzu, the other influential work on Taoism, was written approximately 300 years after the ***Tao Te Ching.*** The author, Chang Tzu, defines the Tao not as a thing or as a substance, but as all things. While always in motion, the movements balance each other so that its force remains the same. The Tao, being unity, cannot be described in words or even understood by our thoughts (Creel, 1970, pp. 2, 3). Thomas Merton (1992), in his translations of the work of Chuang Tzu, supports this principle:

> Tao is beyond words and beyond things. It is not expressed either in word or in silence. When there is no longer word or silence, Tao is apprehended (p. 226).

The Taoist approach to nature is cyclical. This insight is similar to that of the indigenous people of North America. In life there is no beginning or end, and death and birth is part of a never-ending cycle. Decay is necessary for growth and in every end there is a beginning. Creel compares all animal life to the galloping of a horse. "With every movement there is an alteration, at every moment they are undergoing changes" (Creel, 1970, p. 27).

This traditional cyclical view of nature is related to the hermeneutical circle in which understanding is always contextual. According to Gadamer (1976), it concerns the

relationship, in understanding, between the part and the whole in which each part of the whole makes sense only in relationship to the whole and vice versa.

Joan Borysenko (1993) manifests a similar cyclical view of life when she narrates the details of the old European custom of burying the umbilical cord of a newborn baby with the seed of a fruit tree. It is accepted as true that the nutrition and moisture from the umbilical cord will nourish the seed, and in five or six years the tree bears fruit, the tree and what it produces will belong exclusively to the child. Thus, a child learns of the relationship between the order of life, transformations and death (p. 52).

The Tao is like flowing water to Alan Watts. "It is the course, the flow, the drift or the process of nature" (Watts, 1975, p. 27). This fluid and living energy keeps the mind flexible and tolerant. Klein (1984) takes the last statement further by suggesting that when children are aware of this point of view, they will understand the energy that forms our structure on all levels. This understanding of the Tao, in the young, if not recognized, will prevent the child from reaching his or her full potential (p. 103).

1.1.2 Wu Wei

Lao Tzu, in his teaching, proposed the principle of Wu Wei, or non-action, as a way to overcome the hostility, destruction and tyranny existing in Chinese society. Non-action does not mean inertia, laziness or laissez-faire (Watts, 1975, p. 75). Non-action is central to the philosophy of Taoism and can best be expressed by each of these statements:

> Such things, as weapons of war, are wont to rebound.
> The more laws you make, the more thieves there will be.
> The Sage does not boast, so he is given credit.
> He who acts harms, he who grabs lets slip.

Each assertion manifests the principle that in human relationships, force of any kind defeats itself (Barrett, 1993, p. 26).

According to the ***Tao Te Ching,*** "Tao does not do, but nothing is not done." This is interpreted by Hoff to mean that Tao does not force or interfere with events or things but allows them to take their natural course. Naturally, whatever needs to be done, is done (Hoff, 1982, p. 70).

To Palmer (1990), the principle of Wu Wei in Taoism does not attempt to spread a form of passivity. On the contrary, to be more at ease with the stress that is often

associated with an active life today, it proposes the acceptance of a form of discipline to guide our actions (p. 55). Palmer's concept of the principle of non-action will be expanded in Chapter Two of this thesis.

Lao Tzu wrote of Wu Wei, "To yield is to be preserved whole because intervention, either of the state or the person, always results in failure" (Barrett, 1993, p. 26).

1.1.3 Yin Yang

Yin Yang is another important concept associated with Taoism and other Chinese disciplines. The philosophy of Yin Yang alludes to the balancing of the two polarities which are essential parts of a circular flow of energy. Thus, energy that is produced can also be grounded, and the result is a unity with the earth. Yin and Yang are the feminine and masculine cycles of nature, and Taoism is the effect of living in harmony with these cycles (Klein, 1984, pp. 62, 146).

In Taoism, Yin represents femininity, darkness, cold, night, withdrawal, rest, passivity, weakness, earth and mercy. Yang, however, symbolizes masculinity, light, heat, day, expansion, activity, aggression, strength, heaven and severity. When a Westerner first considers these definitions, he or she is inclined to look for opposition

or conflict. This, however, is not the essence of such forces. For example, how can you have day without night? Thus, without Yin there would be no Yang, and the principle of the order of polarities would disappear. This is opposite to the linear philosophy demonstrated in the West's approach to progress. The major industrial nations strongly promote the dogma of high technology as the principal way to create a better world of comfort, wealth, and health for the individual, and for society. However, the introduction of antibiotics, nuclear energy, computer technology, advancements in modes of transportation and modern farming techniques has not eliminated the poverty, suffering and sickness that are rampant in the world today. The Taoist, in response to this belief that technology is the answer, would suggest that more problems are created by this approach. They claim there is always a tendency to meddle, repeatedly, in complex relationships of nature that scientists do not fully understand. These activities then become bogged down in details to the point where the interdependence of such relationships eludes everyone by continuously creating the environment to examine more details and loses a sense of the whole.

Lao Tzu proclaimed, "Knowing the male but keeping the female, one becomes the universal stream. Becoming a universal stream, one is not separated from eternal virtue" (Watts, 1975, p. 22). To the Taoist, they and the Universe

are one and inseparable. Thus, an attitude of respectful trust for themselves and nature prevails (pp. 31, 32). However, this philosophy is in direct contrast to the approach adopted by the people in the West whom Watts describes eloquently as "tourists who study guidebooks and maps instead of wandering freely and looking at the view" (pp. 119, 120).

In Taoism, life is similar to learning how to navigate. It is not a way to become professional in the art of warfare. The Taoist is always cognizant of the natural cycles of the seasons, the movements of the wind and the principles of growth and decay. It is important for one to act with these forces and flow with them. For technology to be constructive, society must begin to see that each person is one with the forces of the Universe. The art of life is to keep the Yin and Yang in balance because there cannot be one without the other (pp. 20, 21).

1.2 TAI-CHI-CH'UAN

1.2.1 Basic Principles

Tai-chi-Ch'uan is another prime example of a practice which attempts to increase an individual's awareness of the oneness of the Universe. In this teaching, the strength and beauty of a creature of nature is made known to the student

by a series of movements. The movements enable an individual to become aware of the symmetry between force and beauty that exists within each of us.

T'ai-chi-Ch'aun links together the ancient Chinese artistry of Ch'uan Shu, with its "coordinated movement of hands, eyes, body and feet;" T'u Na Shu which is "deep breathing from the abdomen to empty out the old and take in the new;" and Tao Yin Shu, the act of "bowing, lifting, crouching and stretching of the limbs" (Mackie, 1981, p. 12). Sue Mackie maintains that T'ai-chi is primarily interested in "the cultivation of chi and the hoarding of power;" that "there is softness in the midst of hardness;" the internalizing of the spirit: and that "consciousness is held in the tan t'ien" (p. 12).

Mackie suggests that T'ai-chi-Ch'uan is the martial art of internal force, of the firm dwelling in the tender, and of the ability to remain unyielding harmonizing with placidness. Within itself, the state of being strong is inherent in elegance. To practice T'ai-chi is to become "a wind blown willow" (pp. 11, 14). An indispensable feature of T'ai-chi is the process of refining chi so that it spreads throughout the energy channels of the body removing the blockages and restoring the force to a symmetrical and innate balance (p. 14).

Intellectually, there is an unspecified mysteriously

captivating quality about T'ai-chi-Ch'uan. An individual's attention must be dedicated exclusively to what is going on. The student "must always be there" even though he or she is well aware of the different movements involved. "Consciousness moves and the body goes along with it" (pp. 17, 18).

T'ai-chi is unique and gratifying, and is an extremely important exercise designed to return the body to its inborn stability (p. 20). The elevation of the mind is present when the practice of T'ai-chi-Ch'uan takes place. A student becomes conscious of the state of being freely and smoothly transformed as it is manifested in the specific way his or her body moves (p. 22).

According to Klein, in his book, ***Movements of Magic*** (1984), the T'ai-chi, or Tao, is the innate force within each human being that controls an individual's general health and prosperity. It is this potent and comprehensive power that enables all forms of life to survive and develop. The effect of comprehending and existing in union with this energy is a life of balance and harmony.

> A discipline exists which can raise each of us to such great levels of awareness, power, health and well-being, our true birthright as natural creatures of the earth. Based on a Chinese teaching over 6,000 years old called "T'ai-chi" (or Taoism), this discipline literally means "the Grand Ultimate Way of Life as taught through movement," or "Grand Ultimate Fist" (Klein, 1984, p. 1).

The object of executing the movements of T'ai-chi-Ch'uan is to develop a sense of serenity, tranquillity and kindness within an individual. The Form is performed "as slowly and smoothly as clouds drifting in the sky" (p. 5). Thus, "an internal environment conducive to meditation" (p. 6) is nurtured within the individual, and because each motion is completed before moving to the next, the attention is brought to centre on the present.

> Often in life, we are so caught up in concentrating on the past and future that we miss the present. And truly, the present is all that exists for us. We may think about the past or imagine the future but we can actually deal only with the present. In the present, we have power (p. 6).

Thich Nhat Hanh alludes to this proposition when he writes, "Only the present is real, only in the present can we be alive" (Hanh, 1987, p. 86). Hanh's ideas will be developed further in Chapter Two of this paper. Bob Klein suggests that a teacher of T'ai-chi-Ch'uan knows of a student's mental condition from the degree of excellence of the Form the individual performs. Initially, the individual must be mentally alert to learn each movement, but eventually the Form must be an instinctive act. He refers to the individual's inner intelligence, or power, which he calls "Body-Mind" (Klein, 1984, p. 7), as the catalyst to bring into being a connected whole within the individual and between the person and his or her surroundings. The Form

acts as the stimulus to ensure the student ascertains and believes in his or her inner intelligence (Body-Mind).

The Form helps the individual to focus on the present moment, and to have faith in what has yet to take place and in their inner power. Because the Form is performed with minimum effort, "so much of your life can be this way--effortless and gentle, yet active and effective" (p. 7). It is the combination and agreement in action of the intellect and an individual's Body-Mind which directs a person to achieve this condition. T'ai-chi-Ch'uan stresses the importance of inner strength and growth. A person's inner life is the hub of the ability to create and to act. Klein considers the Form as an art form which allows a person to actively employ the Body-Mind ability and provides the individual with an indication of the strength, the power to create things and liveliness of this inner person.

In T'ai-chi and Zen, letting go of the need for intellectual control is referred to as "not doing" or "no mind." The practice of meditation is an example of "not doing." "It is a feeling of joyful emptiness, the emptiness of the moon reflected on a still lake" (p. 22). To drop all mental impression of a person's identity and what the individual is able to do, is referred to as "no self" or "not being." Thus these concepts no longer assume control and ensnare the student. The material universe appears

unexpectedly to be animate. A confidential relationship exists between the individual and the external influences, a sense of existing permanently established in all things by means of the person's coherence to the earth, appears without notice. The presence of enchantment in everything that exists is called chi. This force runs freely both ways in a circulatory fashion between the student and the environment--an exceedingly entangled union. By means of the T'ai-chi process, an individual can reach a stable state. The student also becomes conscious of imbalance and of the ways to rectify this unstable condition.

T'ai-chi-Ch'uan provides an individual with the physical metaphors to practice the principles involved. "T'ai-chi-Chuan uses a language in its physical aspect that is readily adaptable to psychological and emotional levels" (p. 40). For example, the term "centring" applies to the way an individual overcomes a crisis. This is shared by the American Indians when they say, "Walk in balance on the Earth Mother" (p. 40). This premise is further manifested by Chief Seattle when he said, "All things are connected like the blood that unites us all" (Cited in Campbell, 1958, p. 34). Seattle's concepts will be examined in more detail later in this chapter.

Force and control are considered inseparable by many people in today's society. In T'ai-chi-Ch'uan, a student is

taught how to transfer additional influence to an adversary so that, paradoxically, the other has less power. By this principle, an individual gains an understanding of the personal force that will totally alter his or her life. A student learns not to oppose adversity directly by not interacting with the impelling force, whether it is physical or emotional, by flowing with it or by changing its direction.

It is exciting for an instructor to observe the dramatic transformation in the students as they develop their expertise in the art of T'ai-chi-Ch'uan. There is an increase in a person's self-reliance, readiness, healthful condition, serenity, ability to create and zeal. A person experiences less stress, resentment, agitation, illness and inertia. "T'ai-chi-Ch'uan brings about inner peace, centring, calmness and joy" (Klein, 1984, p. 71). It is, in fact, a way of keeping in touch an individual's own growth.

The intent of the practice of T'ai-chi-Ch'uan is to "be able to go with the flow, become one with the ONE, knowing we ourselves are the Tao" (Mackie, 1981, p. 23). Primarily, to practice T'ai-chi-Ch'uan is a path towards the oneness of Taoism. This principle is the "philosophical or spiritual source" for the art of T'ai-chi-Ch'uan (p. 23).

In his book, T'ai-chi-Ch'uan and Meditation (1986), Da Liu explains how the various methods of meditation and

exercise are based on the philosophy of Taoism. An important insight to be obtained through understanding the general principles relates to the way in which the practice of an activity such as T'ai-chi-Ch'uan and meditation should add to each other. This condition of being related manifests a delicate intermingling of contrary (yin and yang) propensities. It is this relationship that is observed in the currently renowned diagram generally recognized as the T'ai Chi T'u (Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate) (Liu, 1986, p. 6).

> The Supreme Ultimate through movements produces the yang. This movement, having reached its limit, is followed by quiescence, and by this quiescence it produces the yin. When quiescence has reached its limit, there is a return to movement. Thus movement and quiescence, in alternation, become each source of the other. The distinction between the yin and yang is determined, and their two forms stand revealed (p. 8).

This contemplation of the recurrence of yin and yang is placed in the same order as the basic assumptions of T'ai-chi-Ch'uan and meditation (p. 8).

1.2.2 Body, Spirit and the Earth

T'ai-chi-Ch'uan is the teaching of the skills that enable people to exist in unison with the Universe by an orderly collection of movements developed to raise an individual's level of awareness, meditative powers, physical balance, vigour and ability to protect one's self. It is not

balance, vigour and ability to protect one's self. It is not a tenet. The purpose of T'ai-chi-Ch'uan is "to tap into and channel the powers of nature, both within and around us" (Klein, 1984, p. vii).

> T'ai-chi-Ch'uan reconnects the mind to the body, the consciousness to the subconscious and the individual to his environment. It ends the battle within you, eliminating tension and anxiety (p. vii).

Klein is a graduate of Cornell University with a degree in Zoology. He seeks to live in harmony with the material world by combining his interest in ecology with the practice of T'ai-chi-Ch'uan. He is the author of ***Movements of Magic, The Spirit of T'ai-chi-Ch'uan*** and ***Movements of Power, Ancient Secrets of Unleashing Instinctual Vitality.***

Through the practice of T'ai-chi-Ch'uan a person can again be united with the Earth, our life source. Klein writes of tapping "sources of energy known only to the wild animal and the young child" (p. 1) to calm the mind and to increase the individual's ability to heal the body. T'ai-chi also augments a person's capability to protect the individual from mental agitation and natural injury.

The philosophy of T'ai-chi "is based on living in harmony with nature" (p. 2). The teaching system for the "soft (internal power) style of Kung Fu," which has evolved during the past 1,000 years, has been called Tai-chi-Ch'uan.

> From the Form to Kung-Fu, from dreamwork to healing, T'ai-chi-Ch'uan is a complete system of living in harmony with this natural world of which we are a part (p. 3).

The general religious idea of a heaven above and a hell below, along with the concept of an individual having a self-depreciatory carnal body, bears witness to the lack of positive meaning to any movement from a higher to a lower state. Thus, a mental picture is formed with "God" high, in the cosmos, above all possible secular worldly affairs or substance.

> The earth is calling you. It has something for you. This great creature upon which we live wishes to give you its energy to empower your life. In Western culture, this gift is shunned. We call it gravity and think of it as a force which tries to pull us down toward the centre of the earth (p. 8).

The students of T'ai-chi-Ch'uan are asked to picture themselves attached to a ceiling by a cord which is fastened to the crown of the head and with their feet just making contact with the floor. Now "gravity is experienced not as a force pulling you down, but as an energy filling you up" (P. 9). In T'ai-chi-Ch'uan, it is essential to partially bend the knees to enable the weight to descend lower and lower through the legs and feet to be part of the earth. Instead of a sense of being pulled down, the individual observes a

feeling of energetic cohesion. A force from the ground is projecting upward by means of the limbs and, at the same time, the individual is becoming permanently attached to the ground to absorb all the power available.

> The metaphor of "Mother" Earth becomes very real. The term "rooting" refers to this feeling of roots growing down from the bottoms of your feet into the earth. These roots are composed of the feeling of your weight sinking through your feet (p. 9).

In addition to the energy from the soil, there is also a matching force from overhead which enters the body and flows to the lowest level to become part of the earth.

> The quality of interaction between these two forces and the way in which creativity plays with them within your body is the source of chi (internal energy). Chi, therefore, is not something separate and independent within yourself, but a localized interaction of universal energies (p. 9).

The individual is able to concentrate and guide this power for a number of uses. The "chi" of each individual is not disconnected from the potency of nature as an integral unit, therefore, people are certainly influenced by the pure nature of the forces encompassing them. An individual's surroundings is influencing the person on a continual basis. Klein suggests that an individual should react to this reality in a positive manner. If the person is acutely susceptible to external influences, why not make use of this reaction to such forces by developing a different feeling-an intuitive perception of power within? This is done by

concentrating on the sensation and emotional excitement of chi (p. 9).

A person can use this inner force or energy as a point of reference. The reference point, similar to the centre of a spider's web, is the "consistent energy pattern" (p. 10). Lindbergh recognizes this proposition when she affirms that "Woman must strive to be the still axis within the revolving wheel of relationships, obligations and activities (Lindbergh, 1955, p. 51). Lindbergh's ideas will be examined in Chapter Two. The capacity to be able to know by feeling the forces encompassing the individual is referred to as "rooting," or union with the surroundings. It is not necessarily a line of motion to the ground. It is possible to connect to other areas in any manner or position of the source of influence.

Klein considers the reacting characteristic of T'ai-chi to be analogous to a huge ocean wave. No one can check its progress or motion even though it is moderate in action and subdued. Individuals who practice T'ai-chi are firm, yet gentle and flexible when working with others. They are not antagonistic, nor do they seek adversity. They are unyielding and permanently established in T'ai-chi principles. They are confident beyond doubt and are well aware of how far they will go before they will react. When this limitation is realized, an emotional spring is set free

with no indignation or excessive response. The spring is still flexible, and it is impossible to exert physical or mental force as a means to resist it.

It is this characteristic of T'ai-chi that imparts to the individual a sense of apprehension that "something is about to happen." This potency of expectation is always within the individual and is available anytime. Thus, the person is continually at ease and confident that when necessary this energy will be there to help.

> This power, developed through rooting, is ultimately tied to breath. Throughout spiritual literature the world over, breath is highly regarded as a key to personal development and internal power. In India, it is called "prana" or "life breath." Among the Gnostics and Hebrews it is known as the "breath of God" (Klein, 1984, p. 11).

Inner power will not evolve unless the individual becomes aware of how to breathe properly from the ground up. "It feels as though the breath is absorbed up from the earth, through the feet and into the body. As the breath is expelled, it seems to drain out of the body, through the feet and down into the earth" (p. 12). Unless an individual breathes in this manner, the precept of inner power, which is of great importance to the practice of T'ai-chi-Ch'uan, would be almost impossible to achieve. The student's attention is also rooted in a manner identical to breathing. Klein considers this act of applying the mind as the circulating juice of a tree whose underground part extends

into the ground. The breath serves as nourishment for the tree.

Klein considers T'ai-chi-Ch'uan a precept of life. This Chinese doctrine reunites the student to the soil. To sense this union with the earth is to become aware of a connection to the land and all existence on this planet. The practice of T'ai-chi-Ch'uan is an attempt to open to a more integrated vision of life.

In T'ai-chi-Ch'uan, Body-Mind (inner intelligence) is an individual's connection to nature, the biological roots. "Body-Mind is the original face--the root of your being" (p. 14). The Form unites the student to the earth. The Form just seems to happen, as if propelled by an exterior force, and the student is not consciously aware of the actions of the body. He states that Body-Mind controls chi, and, therefore, provides direction to the Form when linked to the ground. Thus chi attempts to unite all areas of the body to the earth.

> Thus your body and all its parts, the attention, momentum and breath are all connected and flowing together as one unit. It is impossible for you to distinguish one part from the other within yourself; they all seem to be elements of one common force--chi (p. 14).

The integration of body, spirit and environment is important to the individual's health and is vital for the

eco-system. T'ai-chi-Ch'uan nourishes the ability to let go of tension.

> Letting go is a basic, if not the basic principle of T'ai-chi-Ch'uan. It is said that a student's progress is determined by how much he is willing to let go of--tension, emotional programming, fear, thinking, defensiveness, etc. The natural being is already powerful and wise. You must let go of your interference with the body's power and wisdom (p. 16).

T'ai-chi, therefore, teaches that an individual's world must be guided by a process of balancing and integration with the environment. In addition, because Body-Mind is considered the fulcrum point for this balancing system, the Form, therefore, teaches the student how to balance within the two forces that are continually at work in a person's life. One force (Yin) is the absence of motion, or equilibrium, which is trying to maintain a balance, and the other force (Yang), which is dynamic, always wants to move away from the centre point to an extreme and be active for change. This balance between the absence of motion and activity is referred to as "dynamic equilibrium." In T'ai-chi, to be aware of this principle, is to achieve an "optimal state biologically, emotionally, psychological and spiritually" (p. 32).

T'ai-chi-Ch'uan unites a student with the energy of being alive, Tao, to manifest a person's genuine divine sameness. Thus as an individual portion of living existence,

a student will not at any time cease to live--merely transform into another form. "Atoms never die" (p. 56). To counteract the state of being overawed by death, T'ai-chi intensifies the enthusiasm for life and love of others.

> Cosmologically, Yin/Yang are the two creative forces emanating from the primordial, unnameable emptiness (Tao). Yin/Yang is really a description of the cycles of nature, and Taoism is a way of living in harmony with those cycles (p. 62).

The T'ai-chi translation of the world is extensively based on human ecology. At every relative position between organisms and their environment there exists a process to maintain equilibrium. By subsisting in a state of balance, an individual can continue to live in a healthy and favourable state.

T'ai-chi imparts special importance to the fact that what is removed from the world must be given back, and this takes everything into account including potential force. It is logically necessary to have this energy moving in a circle, yin and yang, in such a manner that the force which came into existence is also connected to the earth. In T'ai-chi-Ch'uan, the force is grounded simultaneously as it is produced. "The teaching of connection and harmony between the individual and the environment is the basis of T'ai-chi-Ch'uan" (p. 150).

T'ai-chi-Ch'uan furnishes a purposeful and realistic

point of view in harmony with "the science of ecology and theoretical physics" (p. 157). It supplies a viable structure for sustaining life on earth by its special stress on the condition of all life being mutually dependent, the systematic totality of an individual with his or her surroundings, of intellect with the body and of possessing conscious with unconscious. T'ai-chi concerns itself with the unison of the whole physical organism of the individual, the intellect and the Universe.

1.3 INDIGENOUS PEOPLE OF NORTH AMERICA

The sense of "oneness" between all species on this planet, including humanity, is an integral part of Indian culture. This perception of life was expressed eloquently in Chief Seattle's letter of 1852 to the United States Government. The letter was a response to the Government's request to purchase land from the indigenous people. Chief Seattle, in his letter, not only manifested the philosophy of his people, but also revealed how advanced he was in his concern for all the earth's species when you consider that many fears he expressed were realized. He displayed a feeling of closeness to the earth, and a sense of connection between nature and humanity. "We are part of the earth and it is part of us." "We know the sap which courses through the trees as we know the blood that courses through our

veins" (Cited in Campbell, 1988, p. 34). He consolidated all life forms into one family when he wrote: "The perfumed flowers are our sisters," and "The bear, the deer, the great eagle, these are our brothers" (p.34).

"The water's murmur is the voice of my father's father. The rivers are our brothers. They quench our thirst. They carry our canoes and feed our children" (p. 34). Chief Seattle emphasized the sacred relationship to water and its importance to life on earth. He challenged the new immigrants to preserve the native people's reverence for nature by educating their youth. "Will you teach your children what we have taught our children? That the earth is our mother? What befalls the earth befalls all the sons of the earth" (p. 34).

The letter expressed the fundamental belief that all physical existence is interconnected. This condition of interconnection is similar to the absolute unity within the Universe in Taoism; the Tao is the universal force that yields harmony in nature. Chief Seattle manifested this bond. "This we know: the earth does not belong to man, man belongs to the earth. All things are connected like the blood that unites us all. Man did not weave the web of life, he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself." The "oneness" of all people on earth was also stressed. "Our God is also your God." "As we are part

of the land, you too are part of the land," and "No man, be he Red Man or White Man, can be apart. We are brothers after all" (pp. 34, 35).

When Chief Seattle agreed to sell the land, he challenged the newcomers to "...love it (the land) as we have loved it. Care for it as we have cared for it.... Preserve the land for all children and love it as God loves us all" (p. 35).

This close relationship with nature is identical to what the other Indian people of the Pacific Northwest followed historically. For example, an intimate relationship with the world and its spirits was most prevalent in their lives. Even an inanimate object, such as a rock, possessed a power or spiritual force. The Indian people claim that everything on earth has this quality of spirituality (Bancroft-Hunt, 1979, pp. 69, 70). Beyond this union with the physical environment, an Indian, as part of a religious ceremony, would visit the spiritual world in dreams and trances. A prayer is offered to a creature, but it is intended for the beast's soul or spirit, not for the live animal (pp. 71, 72).

The indigenous people regard the forces of nature with great respect and humility. The effect of their close connection with nature was a spirituality involving respect and cooperation with all life (p. 123).

1.4 AIKIDO

Mirihei Ueshiba (1883-1969), is considered the greatest martial artist in history. In his book, ***The Art of Peace,*** Ueshiba (1992) expressed his dismay of war and its destructive power. Those close to him accepted war as inevitable and were vocal in their deliberation of the cunning strategy planned as a means to victory. He had served as an infantryman in the Russo-Japanese war, and later in Mongolia, therefore, he knew firsthand the horrors of war. He was also a martial art instructor at Japan's top military academy. The effect of this experience, combined with his observations of corrupt politicians and the brutality of Japan's military leaders, influenced his attitude towards warfare.

It was then that Ueshiba started a spiritual quest where he began to see the need for unity in humanity, and between humanity and nature. He recalls three visions, the first vision occurred in 1925: "I saw the entire earth as my home and the sun, moon and stars as my intimate friends. All attachment to material things vanished" (p. 7). This oneness of the Universe is manifested in Toaism and North American Indian culture.

The second vision took place in 1940: "All of the martial art techniques handed down to me by my teachers were

now vehicles for the cultivation of life, knowledge, virtue, and good sense, not devices to throw and pin people" (p.7). The practice of T'ai-chi-Ch'uan is primarily based on such techniques.

The third vision was in 1942. Ueshiba had a vision of the Great Spirit of Peace: "The way of the Warrior has been misunderstood as a means to kill and destroy others. Those who seek competition are making a grave mistake" (p. 8). The method Japan used to enter the Second World War was a classic example of how to plan and fight to obtain victory at any cost. It then became clear to Ueshiba that to fight among yourselves, with others, or destroy the environment is self-destructive.

"To smash, injure or destroy is the worst sin a human can commit. The Way of the Warrior is to prevent slaughter; it is the Art of Peace, the power of love" (p. 8). To Ueshiba, this is the approach a person must practice to become one with nature; "Warriorship is none other than the vitality that sustains all life" (p. 24). He suggests that to follow the Art of Peace is to "create each day anew by clothing yourself with heaven and earth, bathing yourself with wisdom and love, and placing yourself in the heart of Mother's Nature" (p. 27).

The discipline of Aikido (The Art of Peace) originated with Ueshiba in Japan. This mind-body doctrine was

developed, and taught, to tame aggression and to foster fearlessness, wisdom, love and friendship.

The skill of the archer, or archery, is used as the symbol for spiritual enlightenment in the practice of Aikido. With time, practice, and by meditation, the archer's bow and arrow will become one with the practitioner's spirit. The body will be put in synchronicity with the Universe, similarly to the art of T'ai-chi-Ch'uan. Then, according to Ueshiba, the practitioner's mind and body will be in union with the characteristics of the Universe. "Your mind should be in harmony with the functioning of the Universe; your body should be in tune with the movement of the Universe; body and mind should be bound as one, unified with the activity of the Universe" (p. 48). Then, weapons or brute force will not be necessary to succeed.

The term Ki, in Aikido, refers to the energy that drives the Universe. Analogous to "chi" in Taoism, it is also the creative force that holds everything together. The principal insight of Ueshiba is the unity of all life. It is similar to the followers of Taoism and the native Americans, including Chief Seattle. According to Ueshiba, it is impossible to comprehend the whole truth. However, we should "head for the light and the heat, learn from the gods and, through the practice of Aikido, become one with the Divine" (p. 125).

CHAPTER TWO: CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES

2.1 PARKER PALMER

Parker Palmer obtained a doctorate in Sociology from the University of California at Berkeley. Included in his teaching tenures are Georgetown University, Beliot College and Pendle Hill. The latter included participation in a Quaker spiritual community and adult centre located close to Philadelphia. He is currently a workshop leader, a writer and does speaking engagements. His many books and articles reflect his interest in spirituality and education. Included in his work as a writer are ***The Company of Strangers: Christians and the Renewal of America's Public Life, The Promise of Paradise: A Celebration of Contradictions in the Christian Life, To Know As We Are Known: A Spirituality of Education,*** and ***The Active Life: Wisdom for Work, Creativity and Caring.***

The purpose of prayer, to Palmer (1983), is to help us see the "underlying relatedness" that lay beyond the surface. Thus, when the educational system incorporates prayer, it should be to enable an individual to look beyond the superficial appearance into the "realities of life" (pp. 13, 19).

There is more to education beyond the teaching of

facts. It should also include "being drawn into personal responsiveness and accountability to each other and the world of which we are a part" (p. 15). An important component of the educational process should always be "truth." Truth unites the known and the knower, the known become an integral part of the knower's life and destiny. To learn the truth we must have a personal intimate relationship with "what the words reveal" and be willing to follow it with our whole being (pp. 14, 15, 30, 32, 40).

What Palmer refers to as "prayer" is similar to "meditation" in the practice of T'ai-chi-Ch'uan. To live in harmony with nature and feel rooted to the earth is the message of the Taoist. For Palmer, prayer offers a person the opportunity to "enter into silence so deeply that he can hear the whole world's speech...and feel the whole world's connection" (p. 124).

For Palmer, prayer and relating to the world are one and the same. "Prayer means opening myself to the fact that as I reach for the center, the center is reaching for me," and, "As I recollect the unity of life, life is recollecting me in my original wholeness" (p. 11).

Is it essential to understand the need for wholeness for our own survival and happiness? In his book, ***The Active Life*** (1990), Palmer claims that we will always live in a

world of dualism until we find the hidden wholeness behind the diversity of our lives. He describes our fears as monsters within and why we need to confront them to achieve a wholeness that will include the unity and energy to make us truly alive (Palmer, 1990, pp. 29, 34). Here we see a principle of Taoism again, humanity's relationship to the earth for strength. As Thomas Merton emphasizes, Taoism did not compete with Christianity but often completed it. Both Taoism and Christianity, although rooted in different cultures, teach convergent truths; evidence of the wholeness found "hidden behind the world's diversities" (pp. 36, 37).

To illustrate this common need for wholeness, Palmer reviews Chuang Tzu's Tale of Khing, the Woodcarver. To complete the carving task assigned to him, Khing must first discover the wholeness that he will need to complete his work of art and realize the authenticity of his existence (p. 63). This tale clearly displays the principle of Wu Wei, or no action, in Taoism. However, instead of the often used translation "no action," to Palmer it means "right action" which is both disciplined and liberating (p. 55). He also writes: "Right action demands that we find a deeper and truer source of energy and guidance that reverence, power and spectacle can provide" (p. 119). Thus, the wood carver could forget all external details and concentrate on his inner truth (p.61). Palmer suggests that by following what we believe is right or faithful action, we will achieve the

desired result:

> For faithful action is action faithful to the action of things, and when we act organically, our action has consequences for the organism. Surely the result will be healthier, more whole, when our action is freed from fear, from the need to control, from idealistic fantasies, from the discouraging facts that surround us (p. 77).

According to Palmer, Chuang Tzu's poem, ***Active Life,*** is more applicable today than when it was written two thousand years ago. Chuang Tzu says that much of what people do is not really action but is reaction to their environment. In the poem, he depicts those people who continually pursue situations that set off a preferred response to their activities. Such people equate their individuality with specific actions or occupations, and their power to evolve relies on situations where such roles are acted out (pp. 40, 41).

Palmer suggests that before a person invests time and money in a profession, an individual should look within to be in touch with his or her true vocation. He considers a true professional a person whose achievement is directed past his or her individuality to that supporting truth, which is a disguised quality of being whole, on which a person can trust (p. 44).

> "Produce! Get results! Make money! Make friends! Or you will die of despair" (p. 48).

This strong statement concludes C. Tzu's poem. It is to remind the reader that a person who considers that he or she is the maker of their respective world, makes a grave mistake. He continues with, "Surely, no one, no matter how smart or skilful, can make time" (p. 49). He reflects on the premise that if an individual accepts life as a gift, that person will be forced to admit that he or she is no longer in control. He suggests that the stripping away of this illusion of individuality would leave most people uncomfortably vulnerable. However, Chuang Tzu affirms that this condition of discomfort, or despair, is but a degree of progress on a person's trip to a condition of being contented. Palmer also reminds the reader of the need to accept life's endowments to create in a novel and more favourable manner. These gifts include an individual's ability and opportunity to work, new material for research and development, and the particular privilege to visualize how to use such material.

For Palmer, today's education is "aimed at giving us the tools to exercise dominion over the earth" (p. 52). A number of scientific philosophers are currently revoking the general mental conception that there is only one world "out there," which is contrived and influenced by effectiveness intellect that dwells "in here," in each person. The intent of this intelligence is to manipulate an individual's world. A recent attitude suggests that all existence is now in

motion busily acting on each other in an immense elaborate network of common kinship.

> As knowers we both act and are acted upon, and reality as we know it is the outcome of an infinite complex encounter between ourselves and our environment (p. 52).

In his books, ***To know as we are Known*** and ***The Active Life,*** Palmer stresses the importance of community. As "knowers," we act and are acted upon, and if immersed in the activities of an external community, we could lose our image of self-autonomy. When we finally realize this, we become aware that we are connected to others in the community and to the natural world. It is only then we can be free to "become who we were born to be" (Palmer, 1990, pp. 156, 157). Palmer's work is an attempt to restore a meaningful view of contemplation in a culture that has eliminated comtemplation in favour of instrumental action.

Hannah Arendt, in her book, ***The Human Condition*** (1958), suggests that the reversal of the hierarchical order between contemplation and action is perhaps the most important spiritual change in the modern age. The practical urge to advance to a better quality of human life and conditions is primarily the motive for this change. However, she insists that modern technology began "exclusively in an altogether nonpractical search for useless knowledge" (Arendt, 1958, p. 289). For example, the watch was invented, not for practical

use, but "for the highly theoretical purpose of conducting certain experiments with nature" (p. 289).

Arendt proposes that once there is trust in "the ingenuity of his hands" (p.290), this reversal of contemplation and action alleviated the craving for information. For the individual, veracity and experience are essential, and can only be obtained by conscious acts, not by reflection.

> Nothing indeed could be less trustworthy for acquiring knowledge and approaching truth than passive observation or mere contemplation. To be certain, one had to make sure, and order to know one had to do (p. 290).

Thus, certain knowledge was considered to be based on what has been accomplished, and the essential qualities of this experience are measured by doing more of the same.

Arendt describes the modern view of action and success in terms of what we have made ourselves. In modernity, according to Arendt, the qualities of creating and manufacturing, the privileges of ***homo faber,*** were the first in the group of occupations within the active life to ascend to the status previously held by contemplation. She considered this a natural evolution. After all, "it had been an instrument and therefore man in so far as he is a toolmaker that led to the modern revolution" (p. 295).

With the triumph of action over contemplation, a person can only know what he or she has created. This persuasion means that an individual may learn about things that he or she did not create by working out and model the steps through which such entities developed. The fact that this perseverance in creating or taking into account each entity as the effect of a manufacturing process, is extremely typical. Here knowledge is gained by practice. How an item is fabricated is more important than the end product itself. In the following passage Arendt summarizes the main attitudes of *homo faber*:

> his instrumentalization of the world, his confidence in tools and the productivity of the maker of artificial objects, his trust in the all comprehensive range of the means-end category, his conviction that every issue can be solved and every human motivation reduced to the principle of utility, his sovereignity, which regards everything given as material and thinks of the whole of nature as of an immense fabric from which we can cut out whatever we want to resew it however we like, his equation of intelligence with ingenuity, that is, his contempt for all thought which cannot be considered to be "the first step..; "finally his matter-of-course identification of fabrication with action (pp. 305, 306).

2.2 SAM KEEN

Sam Keen studied theology and psychology. He was a consulting editor for many years for ***Psychology Today.*** Currently, he conducts workshops about such subjects as relationships, men's spiritual issues and personal mythology. Keen is the author of such books as ***Fire in the Belly, Inward Bound, To a Dancing God, The Passionate Life, Faces of the Enemy, Apology For Wonder*** and ***Hymns To An Unknown God.***

Keen's books cover a wide range of issues. In this chapter I will focus on his notion of the interconnection of all life. He examines several ways to be connected to the earth and develop a oneness with the Universe. One way is through the breath. In his book, ***The Passionate Life*** (1993), he said that "I am not limited to the cells that are stuffed within this skin sack. I am the air I breathe. It is a question of identity" (Keen, 1993, p. 273).

To Keen, the breath and the spirit are identical. "It is through conscious meditation, or breathing, we can discover Atman, the human spirit or Braham, the universal breath-spirit" (Keen, 1991, p. 243). Breathing is also central to "The Form" in the practice of T'ai-chi-Ch'uan. Chi, in Taoism, is the energy that circulates through the body using the breath.

Another way to become part of the Universe, or connected to the earth, is through the family and the community. In his book, *Fire in the Belly* (1991), Keen suggests the theme of downward spirals as a series of circles moving downwards and inwards trapping ourselves in the illusion that we are separate and independent beings. For Keen, the necessity of community involvement is best expressed by "There is no I without thou." It is only when we see ourselves within a community that we can be both independent and interdependent beings (p.146).

The family is also important to Keen. It is within the family circle that men and women find the compassion and wholeheartedness to strengthen the bonds that hold the family unit and a larger community together. For Keen, the heart, the hearth and the earth will either live or die together (pp. 224, 232).

According to 95 percent of the people who have attended Keen's workshops over a twenty year period, the ideal evnvironment in which to live is in a rural setting, by a sea or a lake, on a mountain, or even in a desert. Keen claims that Wendell Barry expressed this point of view eloquently with these words, "Now it is only in wild places that a man can sense the rarity of being a man" (p. 184). He also suggests that we need to be part of an environment that is organized and vital but is a natural setting to really

feel "at home." This place is "hushed, holy and teeming with meaning and beauty that has not been fabricated or improved by human hands" (p. 184).

In his book, ***Apology For Wonder*** (1969), Keen examined a number of the tenets of past civilizations and discovered that primal man existed in a spirit of continuity rather than a temperament of discontinuity. To them, all existence, including themselves, animals, stars and the gods, relate to and are part of the cosmos. A quotation by Keen to further illustrate this unity is from John Taylor's, ***The Primal Vision.*** "Cosmic oneness is the essential feature of primal religions..fundamentally all things share the same nature and the same interaction one upon another..all are one, all are here, all are now" (Cited in Keen, 1969, p. 63). For primal man, the rhythmical harmony of the cosmos had meaning and a purpose to preserve and enrich life (p. 68). The people, in response to their belief in the unified cosmos, were conscious of belonging to and being an intimate part of all that was (p. 68). In a spirit of close cooperation, their lives were governed by a oneness, or unity with nature, and not by exploitation (pp. 70, 71).

During the evolution of Greek civilization, cooperation with others was based on the understanding of a common relationship to the cosmos. Humility was conceived as an essential precondition of authenticity. A person organized

his or her life based on the patterns observed in the cosmos. The Greek's reasoning was cosmological. The cosmos reflected the structure of the whole Universe, and an individual is part of the cosmos, therefore, it is necessary for a person to respond accordingly (p. 78).

In his book, ***Hymns To An Unknown God*** (1994), Keen is encouraged by the recent interest in spirituality. Spirituality, for Keen, is important for our social and intellectual formation.

> My spirit, like love, cannot be contained within the horizons of my mind. It soars above reason and swoops down into the chaos beneath rationality. It travels with its own passport and freely crosses the frontiers of the known and explainable world (p. 72).

According to Keen, religion initially was an out-of-doors experience. Modernity, characterized by successive stages in which the sacred rites or observations that relate to the sacred have been eliminated, and the ultimate source of the Universe now exists inside a building. Progressively, the act of showing reverence to God was shifted from hallowed groups of trees, natural sources of water, and pastures into an edifice dedicated to the worship of a deity.

Similar to Arendt and Palmer, Keen is concerned that our preoccupation with making and fabricating, with control,

has serious implications for our conception of self and for the natural world.

> At their best, science and technology spring from the sacred power to transcend the givenness of nature that is immanent within the human mind and will. It does violence to this genuine reverence to demonize the impulse to seek a measure of control over nature (p. 189).

In ***Fire in the Belly*** (1991), Keen describes a heroic person with the virtues of modesty and humility (a person of the earth or the humus). The ecological system of ethics disclosed by this person, clearly indicated his or her desire to fit in to become part of the "whole" and to live in harmony to interact with the surroundings (Keen, 1991, p. 153).

Again we are reminded of the Taoist philosophy when Keen said, "Introversion and extroversion are the Yin and Yang of a balanced life because reflection without social action, the inner journey without the practice virtue, is sterile" (p. 245). Keen also proposed in his book, ***The Passionate Life*** (1983), that psychology, ecology and politics are inseparable and life is made up of interchanges. "We are in this together. In fact, we ARE this togetherness. There is no IT in the Universe, only WE" (Keen, 1983, p. 237).

2.3 ANN MORROW LINDBERGH

Ann Morrow Lindbergh is a poet and essayist. She is also a licensed pilot, and as the wife of the famous aviator, Charles Lindbergh, she practised her flying skills as his copilot on many of his trips. She based her books on the information she gathered on their excursions together. However, there was one book, ***Gift from the Sea,*** which she began to write for herself as an exercise "to think out my own particular pattern of doing, my own individual balance of life, work and human relationships" (Lindbergh, 1978, p. 9). Lindbergh was also the author of such books as ***North to the Orient, Listen! the Wind, The Wave of the Future, The Steep Ascent, The Unicorn and Other Poems,*** and ***Dearly Beloved.***

In ***Gift from the Sea*** (1978), Lindbergh narrates her retreat to a remote island, isolated from others, as a way to find peace and contentment. As a mother of five, with grandchildren, and as an artist and active member of the community, her lifestyle, before the vacation, was hectic. However, to be active and meet her commitments, Ann Lindbergh described what was necessary.

> I want first of all to be at peace with myself. I want a singleness of eye, a purity of intention, a central core to my life that will enable me to carry out my obligations and activities as well as I can. I want to live "in grace" as much of the time as possible (p. 23).

To find harmony within yourself is what she meant by the term "grace." Lindbergh was seeking the identical harmony that Socrates asked for in his prayer to Phaedrus, "May the outward and inward man be as one" (p. 23).

Because of her very busy lifestyle and commitments, Lindbergh knew how difficult it would be for her to simplify her life to live "in grace." She was also aware of this need for Americans to constantly increase their levels of contact and communication in life, and because this general notion increases the complexity rather than simplifies her problem, it detracts her from a state of peace. She claims that this multiplicity is more evident in a woman's life than a man's. She notes how rare it was that a saint was a married woman. The problem Lindbergh mused was:

> How to remain whole in the midst of the distractions of life; how to remain balanced, no matter what centrifugal forces tend to pull one off centre; how to remain strong, no matter what shocks come in at the periphery and tend to crack the hub of the wheel (p. 29).

There is no simple answer to this dilemma for Lindbergh. However, the beauty and perfection of the shells she gathered each day on the beach of her island shared with her their order and simplicity of structure. Thus, the channelled whelk provided the first clue which was to simplify her life and eliminate many of the distractions. When she observed the simple structure of the whelk, she put pen to paper to write this thought. "You have set my mind on

journey, up an inwardly winding spiral staircase of thought" (p. 35). Her thinking appears to be directly opposite to Sam Keen's reflection concerning downwards and outward spirals which he claimed led to separation, but she is really saying the same thing. Lindbergh had to find a balance between a state of solitude and community life, full retreat and complete involvement, and wholesale renunciation of the world and total acceptance of the obligations of her environment on earth. This task is similar to the one Palmer had set for himself.

During her first two weeks on her island. Lindbergh was able to shed her clothing, vanity, shelter, the necessity for absolute cleanliness, pride, hypocrisy in human relationships and her "mask." She also realized how little one really needed to survive. It did not take long for her to form a sense of kinship with the birds as she lay on the beach. "I was in harmony with it, melted into the Universe, lost in it" (p. 43), were the words she used to express how she felt as she began to experience a oneness with the Universe as she reflected on the beauty of the earth, sea and air on her island. Lindbergh suggests it be "only when one is connected to one's own core, is one connected to others" (p. 44). When this happens, "women must strive to be the still axis within the revolving wheel of relationships, obligations and activities" (p. 51).

For Lindbergh, a man - woman relationship begins in the present but soon becomes burdened with the past and the future. Her description of marriage suggests it be the weaving of a web in time and space by two people living together, "looking outward and working outward in the same direction" (p. 82). There is a need for a woman to learn independence in order to develop a full relationship with a man. It is also necessary for the man to heighten his feminine qualities of the heart, the mind and the spirit to complete this alliance. By growing this way, "the individual is able to become a world to himself" (p. 97) and be a whole person.

According to Lindbergh, women have gained more opportunity to be themselves because of the availability of the modern household appliances developed during the previous generation. However, they have failed miserably in their concern for spiritual values for themselves or members of their immediate family. She welcomes the advancement in modern communication techniques and the enlargement of the world's circles of influence, but "the interrelatedness of the world links us constantly with more people than our hearts can hold" (p. 124). To adjust for this phenomenon, "the present is passed over in the race for the future, the here is neglected in favour of the there; and the individual is dwarfed by the enormity of the mass" (p. 126).

Lindbergh stresses the point that most Americans do not enjoy what the bountiful present offers but avariciously live for the future. When in Europe, she observed how the average European appeared to have a tendency to enjoy the present moment, similar to children. She is convinced that if our search for the real substance of life is to be successful, then we must learn to appreciate the here, the now and others.

Lindbergh's life took on a different meaning when she returned to the community once again. Her retreat to the sea for solitude and peace was over. The effect of this period away by herself was tremendous. She realized more than ever how important it is to be patient with yourself, and others; to have faith in the oneness of nature; to be open and simple in your activities and relationships; and to enjoy periodic solitude. The impact of her time away can best be expressed with these words:

> When we start at the center of ourselves we discover some of the joy in the now, some of the peace in the here, some of the love in me and thee which go to make up the kingdom of heaven on earth (p. 128).

Lindbergh needed solitude to strengthen the central thread of her being. Only in an environment of complete peace could she find her true self and be able to reach out to form other relationships. I believe that the feelings which she attributes to women in her book are not gender

specific and will certainly apply to anyone who is seeking a closer connection to their inner truth.

In her postscript to the original book, written twenty years later, she affirmed the evidence of a new awareness and growth of consciousness in both men and women concerning the "interrelatedness of all life on our planet." Although this growth has been, and still is, painful, there is now greater independence and cooperation between men and women in an effort to move together to solve the world's problems (pp. 136-138).

2.4 THICH NHAT HANH

Thich Nhat Hanh, a Buddhist monk, lives and writes in a style similar to the Taoist. The Buddhist and the Taoist philosophies both originated in the Orient.

Hanh is a poet, a Zen master, and was the chairman of the Vietnamese Buddhist Peace delegation during the Vietnam war. He was an outspoken critic of the treatment of the Vietnamese people by the national government before his speaking tour in the United States in 1965. Hanh was not allowed to return to Vietnam, and now lives in exile in France. He continues to write, teach, and aid refugees worldwide. He has been described as a cross between a cloud, a snail and a piece of heavy machinery -- a truly religious

presence. Hanh is the author of such books as ***A Guide to Walking Meditation, Being Peace, Peace is Every Step, The Path to Mindfulness in Everyday Life, The Miracle of Mindfulness,*** and ***A Manual on Meditation.***

In his book, ***Being Peace*** (1987), Hanh says that to meditate is to be fully aware of everything, i.e. in our bodies, in our feelings, in our minds, and in the world. He also reminds us that, according to the Buddha, if you want to understand anything, or anyone, you must first become one with what you want to understand (pp. 4, 37). The subject and the object of knowledge rely on each other. Thus, meditation on the interdependence of all objects, is also meditation on the mind. It is when one looks deeply into objects of the mind you can see reality as a great integrated whole. "To see one in all and all in one is to free oneself of the false attachment to the ego to understand the connected reality" (Hanh, ***Miracle of Mindfulness,*** 1987, pp. 46, 48). The independent qualities of reality are imagination, interdependence and ultimate perfection. Imagination is an illusion composed of fragments of reality, but meditation on interdependence is the process by which the practitioner is able to connect these fragments to be "one" with reality (p. 56).

For Sam Keen, the breath and the spirit are identical. In his book, ***Miracle of Mindfulness*** (1987), Hanh suggests

that it is the breath that forms a bridge between the body and the mind. For Hanh, the breath is "the element that reconciles our body and mind, and which makes possible the one-ness of body and mind" (p. 23).

The primary purpose of meditation, for Hanh, is to still the soul. This is the first step towards developing a tranquil heart and a true mind. "True mind is our real self, is the Buddha: the pure one-ness which cannot be cut up by the illusory divisions of separate selves, created by concepts and language" (p. 42). To be free is to have seen the reality of interdependence and truly understand it. What is included in this reality are its two faces, life and death (pp. 49, 50).

In his book, ***Being Peace*** (1987), Hanh informs us that "Buddhism, in order to be Buddhism, must be suitable, appropriate to the psychology and the culture of the society that it serves" (p.84). He presents a form of Buddhism suitable for modern society, called the "Order of Interbeing." This form of Buddhism reminds us to be "in touch with oneself in order to find out the source of wisdom, understanding, and compassion in each of us" (p. 85). He also reminds us to continue to pursue the understanding and compassion in our society that began with the Buddhas.

"Only the present is real, only in the present moment can we be alive" (p. 86). Hanh, in this quotation, stresses how important it is for us to be at peace, to have compassion for others, and to be happy now. He also informs us that a requirement of this form of Buddhism is to be aware that love and understanding are real things in oneself and in society. He quotes, "I am, therefore you are. You are, therefore I am. That is the meaning of the word `interbeing.' We inter-are" (p. 87).

Herbert Benson, in his book, ***Beyond the Relaxation Response*** (1984), examined the teachings of the Buddha and, like Nhat Hanh, discovered that moments of enlightenment, grace or insight, revealed that the Universe is not made up of separate parts, but that all parts are really manifestations of the same whole. Benson considers this is a really important concept. He also suggests that if everything is interconnected, it will be easier to learn how to use our minds to influence the functioning of the body. He reflects on the possibility that this control of the mind could be extended to the physical world around us as well (Benson, 1984, pp. 22, 23). The Buddhists of Tibet believe that positive energy is created in the Universe by the practice of meditation. This powerful force can be beneficial as an energy for healing. This is the same force called the "chi" in Taoism and

T'ai-chi-Ch'uan (p. 100) (cf. Dossey, 1993).

2.5 ROBERT GRUDIN

In his book, ***The Grace of Great Things*** (1990), Grudin suggests that to create develops a sense of wholeness in the individual. You begin to look beneath the surface and ask the questions others do not. It is these questions, and possible answers, that open one up to other points of view that will, in turn, promote new ideas and lead to new discoveries (Grudin, 1990, p. 15).

To be creative is a pleasurable and spiritual experience. It can also be painful. A sense of jubilation exists when an insight into a new concept or discovery is present. However, creativity does not necessarily end well. Simply introducing new ideas into society may end in disapproval and rejection.

Today's educational systems, and society in general, according to Grudin, do not give our children opportunities to develop the capability to think beyond the limited number of specific and "goal-driven" professional areas of interest. Thus, a child does not develop a mental process towards an organic whole (p. 39). Hannah Arendt would say that this is a natural extension of our commitment to ***homo faber***.

Grudin suggests that an educational system that emphasizes the solution to a problem rather than the process inhibits inspiration and originality. For Grudin, a mind stimulated and open to something new and exciting, will cultivate the desire to learn to solve problems (p. 13, 14). A person who is inventive is able to rethink a problem, be aware of the previous and current solutions and, finally, consider all alternatives available to make the best possible choice (p. 22). An example of this philosophy exists today in the new series of a math programme for elementary schools in Montreal called "Challenging Math."

Grudin is also concerned with the lack of integrity that may be present in the creative process. He finds that the word integrity may be misunderstood and lists the important factors:

> Integrity is an inner psychological harmony or wholeness, a conformity of personal expression with psychological reality, and an extension of wholeness and conformity in time, through thick and thin (p. 74).

This definition implies that a creative person with integrity is always at ease and open to the drive of the spirit within. Therefore, for this person, the path between a thought and an action would never be interrupted or broken, and harmony will always exist between the thinking process and any outer circumstances. The effect of this amity is a "prolonged and focused delight" in the creative

process (pp. 73, 74).

Perhaps this is what Lao Tzu was referring to in his writing:

> Knowing constancy is insight.
> Not knowing constancy leads to disaster.
> Knowing constancy, the mind is open
> (Lu Tsu, 1989, p. 18).

Grudin's use of the word spirit may be analogous to inner intelligence, the Tao's expression. This is similar to the effect of prayer for Parker Palmer. Grudin expects a creative person to discover and generate new ideas and issues.

2.6 CHARLENE SPRETNAK

Charlene Spretnak, in her book, ***The Spiritual Dimension of Green Politics*** (1986), expressed the need for a closer link between the conventional religious persuasion and political awareness of our interrelatedness with the Universe.

For Spretnak, the act of growing up and "coming of age in the modern era marks a passage into emptiness" (Spretnak, 1986, p. 15). Approaching maturity, Spretnak discarded the creativity and imagination nurtured early in her formal education trying to understand the adult world around her.

She soon discovered that this world included many entities whose sole purpose is to occupy one's time. For Spretnak, "there is no inner life in modern, technological society" (p. 16), and one's interest in the many diversions of today existed merely to avoid this discovery. To counter the emptiness of modern society, Spretnak decided to enroll in a Jesuit university. She received a good education, but was disappointed at the spiritual emptiness she felt when she finally graduated.

Spretnak continued with her graduate work. Her PhD programme, however, failed to have meaning. It was then she began to search for a form of spiritual teaching other than Christianity to enlighten her own spiritual quest. It was in India she discovered what she was looking for in Buddhist Vipassana, or "insight", meditation. On her return to the United States, she became interested in feminist research into pre-Christian cultures and focused her own work on the pre-Hellenic mythology of Greece. Spretnak learned new meanings of ritual by participating in feminist spirituality groups. She became attracted to the Christian mystics and "creation spirituality." The latter "honors the natural world as the most profound expression of the Divine" (p. 17). In her study of Taoism and Native American spirituality, she experienced pleasure and pain. How can one explore a philosophy of life as natured-based as these two paths, and not be aware of how far modern society is from

understanding ecological common sense (p. 18)?

What first attracted Spretnak to the Green Party, in West Germany, was their slogan, "We are neither left nor right; we are in front" (p. 21). The Green Party's reference to "the spiritual impoverishment of modern society" suggested to her that this party has found an antidote to this lack of social responsibility, and has embodied it in a political entity of substance. Her many interviews with Green parliamentarians, in the Bundestag, left her with no doubt that there is a no spiritual dimension to Green politics. It is forbidden to bring religious connotation into German politics, therefore, any reference to a spiritual importance is unlikely to come out of West Germany.

Spretnak returned to the United States to establish a form of Green politics based on the general ideas of "sustainability and interrelatedness:"

> One could say that human systems are sustainable to the extent that they reflect the fact of interrelatedness: the dynamics of Nature arching and stretching through the cycles of her permutations; the dynamics of humans interacting, deftly or brutally, with the rest of Nature; the dynamics of the person interacting with a system and that system with others (p. 23).

For the Greens, "deep ecology encompasses the study of nature's web of interrelated processes and the application of that study to our interactions with nature and among

ourselves" (p. 23). This philosophy includes the respect for all human and nonhuman life on this planet and, except the normal destruction of life for human consumption, the right of all nature to exist.

Spretnak proposes that we can experience a connection with all forms of existence when we reveal our true nature and employ "the subtle, suprarational reaches of the mind" (p. 41). Similar to the forces of polarity in Yin and Yang, she describes the rising and ebbing of energy to and from the earth. This experience of unity with the One, or God or Cosmic consciousness, is the oneness with all creation. The desire to live with this understanding and level of awareness is, and was, common to the sages of all the great religions. For Spretnak, to live in this state of awareness is the true meaning of living in a "state of grace" (pp. 41, 42).

Spretnak suggests that knowledge of nature as a subject to be studied and understood in the academic milieu, is just as important as the teaching of God's creation in religious institutions. However, for a person to be aware of ecological rationality, an individual must have respect and love for nature. In a religious class a person learns to respect all God's creatures. To augment these lessons, it is important to teach the depth and value of nature in a science class (p. 57).

2.7 BRENDA UELAND

"This is what I learned: that everybody is talented, original and has something important to say" (Ueland, 1987, p. 3). Brenda Ueland begins with this statement in the first chapter of her book, ***If You Want to Write: A Book About Art, Independence and Spirit*** (1987). She learned this reality as a writer and as the teacher of a Writing class for many years. To be human is to be talented and each of us has something to express. However, according to Ueland, to be original in what you say, you must tell the truth, and speak from your true self and not from the person you think you should be. To know you are talented and original is a form of self-trust.

Ueland proposes that not only is there a creative power and imagination in each of us, there is also the need to express and share this desire with others. However, at a very early age we are conditioned by "helpful criticism" from teachers, and others. The latter, we can assume, were also discouraged by their peers. The effect of this criticism is that we allow the creative energy within to fade and we pretend it is not important. Obligation takes its place. Ueland suggests that because we do not respect this power, we do not use it or keep it alive in others by listening to them. For her, to love a person is to listen to them. When you see and believe in the poet within them, "you

keep the god and poet alive and make it flourish" (p. 6).

Ueland examines the level of wholeness in a person required to allow the creative ability to flourish. She deliberately equates the creative power of a person with the Holy Spirit and, to her, this power is life itself. This is the spirit which "is the only important thing about us" (p. 10). She wants us to keep this spirit alive by using it, letting it out and by giving some of our time to it. People spend most of their lives in professional activities with no time or energy for artistic expression. Ueland believes this is "a fearful sin against themselves" (p. 11).

The creative power in each of us is unlimited and will increase as we use it, according to Ueland. The impulse or influence required to create will develop slowly and without fanfare; a quiet time is always important to let new ideas in. Ueland, for example, is inspired as she walks at a comfortably unstrained pace. This is the time when she can live in the present, and the creative power thrives within her. This approach to living in the present is analogous to what T.N. Hanh referred to when he said, "Only the present is real, only in the present moment can we be alive" (Hanh, 1987, p. 86). Ueland is in tune with Hanh when she proposed that "it is when you are really living in the present that you are living spiritually, with the imagination" (Ueland, 1987, p. 52).

Our ego is really two egos, according to Ueland. The "human ego," or conceit, represents a static state and the other, the "divine ego" is one's sense of power and inner understanding. She wants us to let go of our conceit, to encompass the creative light, or imagination, within, and to allow it to grow. To be able to see this light, respect it and let it out in our work, is the direct effect of this growth. This is the "downwards spiral" to your true Self. To finally reach this level, is to continually reflect this Self in your creative work (pp. 10, 43, 88, 89, 102).

Ueland is directing most of her comments specifically to the women whose contemporary life styles may be unfulfilled. These women are told often how wonderful and effective their particular menial activity is for others, yet they realize that something is not right:

> They sense that if you are always doing something for others, like a servant or a nurse, and never anything for yourself, you cannot do others any good (p. 100).

To influence someone else spiritually, according to Ueland, one must work hard at what you love and find important to you. For example, if a child can see her or his mother active in the work she has an aptitude for and enjoys doing, the child will follow the mother's example. She also suggests that when women begin "to do their thing" and set an example for others, "we will have in one generation the

most remarkable and glorious children" (p. 101).

Ann Lindbergh's observation about the rarity of a saint being a married woman is similar to the spiritual limitation of women expressed by Ueland. Lindbergh's book, ***A Gift from the Sea,*** came out in 1955, and the first edition of Ueland's book, ***If You Want to Write,*** in 193[illegible] In recent years the feminine movement has taken positive steps. However, there is a need for further growth in North America for women to set an example for the rest of the world to encourage mothers to use their creative talent. This example will set the pattern for future generations to express themselves as they are and not as they think they should be. Both Lindbergh and Ueland expressed their concerns for the need for women to be aware of their potential and set the example for their children.

Ueland's prime concern was to help a person develop writing skills. However, I believe that the principle manifested in her writing is applicable to all creative activity. A writer, an artist, a musician, or even a scientist, who connects to the true Self, enhances the creative power within.

CHAPTER THREE: A PERSPECTIVE FROM THE MARGINS: NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE

3.1 BACKGROUND

The term, near-death experience, popularized by Dr. Raymond Moody in his book, ***Life After Life,*** in 1975, refers to people who were pronounced clinically dead but revived, and those individuals who were close to death and survived. His book is an account of how their near-death experiences influenced their lives in terms of priorities and their concern for others and the future.

Discussions and representations of near-death experiences are certainly not new to our culture. Evidence of near-death visions, or returning from death, is manifested in ***The Tibetan Book of the Dead,*** the ***Egyptian Book of the Dead,*** the ***Bible,*** in North American Indian folk-lore, and in the history of South West Pacific natives (Lore, 1992). In her book, ***Otherworld Journeys*** (1987), Carol Zaleski introduces the results of her research on the historical near-death experiences of different cultures.

> In nearly all cultures, people have told stories of travel to another world, in which a hero, shaman, prophet, king, or ordinary mortal passes through the gates of death and returns with a message for the living (p. 3).

In the shaman lore of Central Asia and Siberia, the shaman is the specialist in ecstasy who, by a symbolic encounter with death, is able to pass out of his body and undertake mystical odyssey through all the cosmic regions. The Australian aboriginal medicine man descends into a dark cave to be dismembered by spirits and ingests magic crystals which lift him to the sky. The Igulik Eskimo shaman travels to the ocean floor to pacify the whimsey mothers of the sea beasts (p. 13).

> The shamanic otherworld journey survives in the modern world not only as a tribal religious phenomenon, but also in new forms born from the mingling of diverse religious and culture systems (p. 13).

The evolution of the shaman's otherworld journey is considered the historical step towards the modern near-death visions experienced by many today. The modern visionary, like the shaman, returns from the dead with a changed attitude towards life and a special purpose for existing. In her book, ***Fire in the Soul*** (1993), Joan Borysenko reports that these people "are often left with an abiding sense of love, security and faith in the ultimate friendliness of the Universe" (p. 39). Dr. Raymond Moody, as a physician, relates in ***The Light Beyond*** (1988), the reports of scientists, psychologists, Christians, Hebrews, atheists and others, of the remarkable meetings with beings of light as part of the near-death experiences. They meet beings of

light that "glow with a beautiful and intense luminescence that seems to permeate everything and fill the person with love" (cited in Borysenko, 1993, p. 39). The light being acts as a guide to meet what Moody calls a Supreme Being of Light whom many described as Jesus or a father God of complete love and forgiveness. Others attached no specific religious or cultural recognition to this event but were surprised by the manifestation of glory in the presence of this Supreme Being. "The description apparently varies with the religious orientation of the dying person. We seem to experience God, to some extent, through the filter of our beliefs" (Borysenko, 1993, p. 39).

To be grateful and have respect for life is a common attitude for the individual who has experienced this otherworld journey. The emotional interconnectedness of life is made perfectly clear to all who undergo this phenomenon. Like Native Americans, it is evidently clear to a visionary who returns from death that "we are part of the earth and the earth is part of us. We cannot hurt any living thing without hurting ourselves, nor can we nurture anything or anyone without also nurturing ourselves" (p. 41).

It is estimated that 5 percent of the population of North America have experienced a near-death vision (p. 152). The fact that these individuals come from an assortment of religious and cultural backgrounds is significant. More men,

women and children are coming forward to tell others of their experiences and because of the modern medical resuscitation techniques available today, the possibility of an increase in the number of these events occurring is expected.

3.2 PROCESS

Each individual who experiences this phenomenon reports seeing a brilliant light that is described as brighter than daylight; it is clear, white, golden, yellow or orange. They all agree that, though the light is very bright, it is beautiful and restful to the eyes, and comforting to look at with no discomfort to the observer. Each individual senses an attraction to the light and, simultaneously, becomes part of it (Zaleski, 1987, p. 123). One visionary exclaimed: "I became the light as I became one with this omnipresent light, its knowledge became my knowledge....the whole direction of mankind became evident to me" (p. 126). Another individual observed: "God was me and I was God. I was part of the light and I was one with it. I was not separate....I was God, as you are, as everyone is" (p. 126).

Raymond Moody proposes that this light is equal to love. In each case, a patient would tell of a light that "glows with a beautiful and intense luminescence that seems to permeate everything and fill the person with love" (cited

in Borysenko, 1993, p. 39). Melvin Morse, in his book, *Closer to the Light: Learning from the Near-death Experiences of Children,* reflects on the difficulty a person has when asked to describe the light. One child depicted the light as "so beautiful that it couldn't be called a light. It represented love and peace and happiness and complete and utter joy" (cited in Borysenko, 1993, p. 152).

Though near-death survivors arrive at the light in different ways, they basically use the same words to express what they experience:

> The light radiates wisdom and compassion; it floods the mind, expanding awareness until one seems to comprehend everything in a single gaze. It was in, around, and through everything. It is what halos are made of. It is God made visible, in, around, and through everything (Zaleski, 1987, pp. 124, 125).

Joan Borysenko in *Fire In The Soul* (1993), asks the question "What if those things that seem unfair turn out to make sense?" For those who have returned from an otherworld journey, "it is there in the presence of the Light that we understand the circumstances of our life." Everything now makes sense. It was necessary to take this journey so that the soul would find the way back to the Source (p. 76).

What is common to most near-death narratives is the perception of movement through a tunnel, across fields or along a path, guided by a spirit through a vast expanse of

darkness towards a light (Zaleski, 1987, p. 7). The visionary "is suspended in space and watching the light grow nearer and larger until it dispels the surrounding mist and gloom" (p. 124).

Joan Borysenko describes a "luminous kind of experience" associated with her mother's death. When meditating in her mother's hospital room, Borysenko had a vision that "pulled me out of normal, waking consciousness into another realm."

> In the vision I was a pregnant mother, laboring to give birth to a baby. Remarkably, I was simultaneously the baby in the process of being born. Although the birth superficially involved pain and fear, it was deeply joyful, peaceful and transcendent. As the mother I felt the holiness of being a gateway into life. As the baby I was in wondrous awe of the bright, mysterious and awesome Light I saw at the end of the long, dark tunnel of birth. From the perspective of being both mother and child, I felt totally at one with my mother. Our life together-in all its joys, sorrows, angers and anguishes-made perfect sense. I was aware of her consciousness moving down the dark tunnel and leaving this world, already rejoicing in the splendor of her return to the Light. She had birthed me into this world, and I felt that I had birthed her out of it (Borysenko, 1993, p. 147).

In ***Back from Light*** (Lore, 1992), a near-death visionary spoke of seeing her mother "both inside and outside of herself." She felt wrapped in her mother's love that is characterized by joy and peace.

Although the near-death subjects noticed a loss of

taste and smell, their sight and hearing are stimulated. "The kinesthetic sense that registers weight, motion, and position also vanishes." These sensory impressions may have been selected "for their link to the sense of self." To experience the otherworld journey, "the soul must be stripped of nonessential attributes; in order to experience reality directly, it becomes an undiscriminating organ of knowledge and affection." The reports by the near-death survivors suggest that only "the minimal traits required to make a person are retained" (Zaleski, 1987, pp. 119, 120).

The act of leaving the body suddenly and hanging suspended to watch the world go by is a common version of near-death experience. "I was looking down at my physical body from above." The transition was described as "a cauldron of motion" in the darkness of the vast space of the Universe. Even though familiar and welcoming sights were experienced, the visionary was in a sense of absolute awe as the otherworld journey progressed (Lore, 1992).

> At such moments we are in touch with our own true nature, there is absolutely and positively no fear. Fear cannot exist where there is connectedness because the core of fear is isolation (Borysenko, 1993, p. 84).

3.3 EFFECTS

The most striking effect of a near-death experience is the total change in personality and life style. This transformation may vary, based on the individual's religious and cultural background, but there were several changes common to most. For many, there is now meaning and purpose to life. This is demonstrated by their zeal for mental and physical well-being. An example of this attitude is expressed by one near-death visionary when interviewed by Joan Borysenko. "I appreciate every life" (p. 41).

Dr. James Fowler, in ***Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*** (1981), outlines a number of phases in the development of faith that parallel our psychological evolution. The final phase in the order of development is the stage "universalizing faith." This is the level Fowler believes more and more people are operating out of. "We act on the knowledge that division between people must be overcome and that compassion is the fullest expression of faith." The near-death visionary normally operates at this level. This phase, "universalizing faith," refers to a commitment to bring...."into being a world based on correctness, understanding, wise use of resources and kindness" (cited in Borysenko, 1993, p. 46).

Maslow manifests this concept of connection during

events of peak experiences in his book, *Toward A Psychology of Being* (1968). Similar to those near-death survivors, he advises us that we can connect with our higher Self in a moment of wholeness when we are completely absorbed in the present. Then, and only then, we will realize "joy, peace, security, unity, harmony, love, sacredness and a vibrant sense of aliveness" (Maslow, 1968, p. 83). To live in and fully appreciate the present is to be constantly aware of everything according to Thich Nhat Hanh. For Hanh, Maslow's "higher Self" is the "Real self" which is pure oneness. Borysenko suggests there are moments when we all sense a special connection to others. "These peak experiences or holy moments are characterized by a profound sense of unity with nature, other people or the Universe" (Borysenko, 1993, p.84). This sense of unity is reported often by near-death visionaries. "Forgiving someone, and, in that instant, feeling at one with them" (p. 84), is also a moment of unity with nature. For Borysenko, these experiences are "freely given states of grace" (p. 84). This grace is similar to the "sense of grace" Ann Lindbergh experienced on her beach manifested in Chapter Two.

A person who has experienced an otherworld journey is transformed psychologically and spiritually. Gone are the bad deaths, harsh judgement scenes, purgatorial torments and infernal terrors of medieval visions (Zaleski, p. 7). What

has replaced these visions are perceptions of peace, calm and total love. One who has experienced a near-death vision loses all fear of death and has the desire to accomplish and achieve their purpose in life. Hope, love and a desire to give takes the place of the desire to achieve (Lore, 1992).

The long-term effects of a near-death experience are spectacular. Children, after revival, exhibit extraordinary maturity for their years and show great wisdom and compassion towards others.

> Upon reaching adolescence, they almost never use drugs or alcohol, understanding at some level that these substances dim the Light rather than leading closer to it (Borysenko, 1993, p. 153).

To see the Light is to reach a deeper level of understanding with no more fear. They have seen beyond the Light into "the radiance that is love itself," and in presence of this love, all things become rational, reasonable and realistic (p. 152).

According to contemporary literature, "one should not fear death, that one should give up guilt and worries and live in the moment, and that the key to life is love, learning and service" (Zaleski, 1987, p. 145). Many visionaries report that love and knowledge are the two things that people take with them when they die (Borysenko, 1993, p. 41). Other near-death survivors say that we only take love (Lore, 1992).

The fear of being ridiculed and marginalized limits the number of survivors of near-death who are willing to talk about their experience. Survivors also face the skepticism of the medical profession. Sherwin Nuland, in ***How We Die*** (1994), confirms that it is impractical not to accept the findings of dependable scientific investigation regarding the revelations of near-death survivors. However, he is a skeptic, and considers the cause of the near-death phenomenon to be biological and not parapsychological.

> The fact that it seems in some few instances to occur even when "death" has been prolonged or relatively stress-free does not alter my expectation that it will one day be proven to be driven, if not specifically by endorphins, then by some similar biochemical mechanism (Nuland, 1994, p. 138).

He also suggests that "other factors may play a role, such as injected narcotics or toxic materials produced by the illness itself" (p. 138). Nuland is convinced that "we must not only question all things but be willing to believe that all things are possible" (p. 138).

Nuland's hesitations, however, do not call into question the transformations that follow a near-death experience. He recognizes the existence of the near-death phenomenon and the quality of being calm that is occasionally sensed when death is unexpectedly close. He does, however, "question the frequency of its occurrence in

circumstances other than those that are sudden" (p. 139).

In her book, ***The Power Of Place*** (1993), Winnifred Gallagher provides the opinion of Michael Persinger, a professor of psychology and neuroscience at Laurentian University, who claims "profound perceptual changes, such as hallucinations, can result from the induction of substantial direct current into the body" (Gallagher, 1993, p. 91).

> Persinger has orchestrated laboratory versions of the heightened experience that have throughout history drawn people to religion, art, and drugs, as well as special places (p. 91).

His work at a cancer clinic suggests there is a need for the synthetic stimulation of "mystical experiences" of the type his research volunteers report. "One dimension of our work is to find ways to let the dying have an experience that will reduce that suffering. So what if it's synthesized" (p. 91)?

Zaleski (1987) states, "One conclusion to which the present study leads is that the West has seen no steady progress from literal to literary use of the otherworld journey motif" (p. 184). It is possible, therefore, to seriously accept the contemporary near-death reports. However, she contends that "it is safer to treat the otherworld journey solely as a metaphor or literary motif that illustrates a psychological or moral truth" (p. 184). To Zaleski, the otherworld is a powerful symbol because it

suggests a concurrence with an imagined reality that has additional possibilities not yet realized. What may provide the sense of orientation in "this" world to prevent us from wandering about like lost souls, is our tendency to believe in the existence of another world (p. 202). Therefore, she advocates it is wrong to ignore the claims of the individuals who report a near-death experience before evaluating their near-death testimony (p. 185). "To determine objectively whether near-death reports are accurate or inaccurate depictions of the future life," is unrealistic according to Zaleski. However, she suggests that we reflect on the near-death visions as a product of pious fancy, the effect of which is "meaning through symbolic forms," rather a literal translation of the event (p. 187).

> In speaking of symbolism, I have in mind a definition that the reader may not share but may be willing to grant for the purpose of discussion. According to most dictionaries, a symbol is an image or object that represents something beyond itself. A symbol participates in the reality that it represents. It does not copy or fully contain that reality, but does communicate some of its power. Unlike a metaphor, it cannot adequately be translated into conceptual terms (pp. 190, 191).

According to Zaleski, theology's basic element is symbol. "Its task is to assess the health of our symbols: for when one judges a symbol, one cannot say whether it is true or false, but only whether it is vital or weak" (p. 191). Its systematic procedure is officious and whatever it reviews analytically can never be verified. Instead of the

availability of the actual truth, a practical standard must be adopted to consider the validity of the symbols reported in near-death testimony. She proposes that theology's specific duty "is not to describe the truth but to promote and assist the quest for truth" (p. 192). Zaleski went further to suggest that a criterion be established, along with openness to the meanings of the symbols, in order to validate a near-death testimony.

> If we fully recognize the symbolic nature of near-death testimony (and accept the limits that imposes on us), then in the end we will be able to accord it a value that would not otherwise be possible, this in turn will yield further insight into the visionary, imaginative, and therapeutic aspects of religious thought in general (p. 192).

Zaleski believes that we augment our awareness of the facts of history as we review the near-death testimony of visionaries and learn that we are still part of the myth-making past. She also proposes that the near-death literature record the authentic and invariable attestation of the experience of each person involved. For her, the near-death experience is the effect of the imagination based on the individual's culture and beliefs. "One sign of its social character is its individualistic message" because "human beings are essentially alone in the experience of life and death and in the encounter with transcendent values" (p. 197).

Even if we grant that near-death visions convey

> something real, there is no reliable way to formulate what that something is. We cannot take a consensus of the visionaries; their visions are too culturally specific. We cannot crack their symbolic code; and we know before we start that every explanation or interpretation, however thoughtful, will leave the essential mystery untouched (p. 199).

The integrity of the story told by the near-death visionary is attributed to the fact that not only is the testimony communicated but there is also a message involved. To back up her assumption that the other world "plays a significant role in our imaginative appropriation of moral and religious ideals" (p. 201), she quotes George Santayana's definition of religion:

> Any attempt to speak without speaking any particular language is not more hopeless than the attempt to have a religion that shall be no religion in particular....Thus every living and healthy religion has a marked idiosyncrasy; its power consists in its special and surprising message and in the bias which that revelation gives to life. The vistas it opens and the mysteries it propounds are another world to live in; and another world to live in--whether we expect ever to pass wholly over into it or not--is what we mean by having a religion (pp. 201, 202).

The *Tibetan Book of the Dead* cautions the departed "to recognize his afterlife visions as a projection of the mind's own radiance" (cited in Zaleski, 1987, p. 201). Zaleski alludes to the fact that if we accept this premise, we are no longer free from bias or prejudice in our search for truth.

Zaleski presumes that the otherworld journey story may

become important as and when a culture develops, or during any conflict that may occur when there is a closer union with another culture. A new far-reaching mental view may develop in which our social and natural world of human experience may appear in proper relation to each other. The effect of this may lead to a known discord and spiritual displacement until this perspective is absorbed by the religious inventiveness of the mind. Then, if the otherworld journey is a method by which religious imagination receives mental nourishment from a cultural cosmology, as in the past, we can expect the scientific community to question the validity of the near-death event. She proposed that the effect of the otherworld journey stories is to lead us to accept two possibilities:

> As works of visionary topography they provide an updated, culturally sanctioned picture of the cosmos, and as works of moral and spiritual instruction they call on us to inhabit this cosmos, by overcoming the fear or forgetfulness that makes us as insensible to life as to death. All this is the action of the religious imagination (Zalesky, 1987, p. 203).

To recognize that there may be some merit to the influence of these otherworld testimonies to set us right in relation to social and natural principles is a possibility. However, Zaleski is not convinced "whether their specific content might be relevant to our own view of life and death" (p. 203). She does admit that those who have experienced near-death visions, and those who heard the stories,

continue to search for the milieu to look for and put into practice their understanding of the true nature of things. Near-death literature may lead us to respond personally to the subject of life and death instead of calling for answers because we are fragmented in our religious orientation.

To have value, the insight made known to us by near-death literature must be verified by our respective experience. We may not have a problem respecting the statements made by the visionaries to prove an event which has changed their lives, but to verify their disclosures we must, in some way, experience the event ourselves. This is similar to religious loyalty. "Truths are true only insofar as religious people make them their own" (p. 205).

Zaleski is convinced there is a fundamental relationship between otherworld visions and our ability to mentally create images; each one of us is an otherworld traveler.

> Otherworld visions are products of the same imaginative power that is active in our ordinary ways of visualizing death; our tendency to portray ideas in concrete, embodied, and dramatic forms; our need to internalize the cultural map of the physical universe; and our drive to experience that universe as a moral and spiritual cosmos in which we belong and have a purpose (p. 205).

She proposes that within the limits of her work, "we are able to grant the validity of near-death testimony as one way in which the religious imagination mediates the search

for ultimate truth" (p. 205).

Whether or not the near-death experience is literal or symbolic, parapsychological or biological, the message of its visionaries is consistent with the traditional and contemporary prospectives on spirituality presented in this thesis. All life is an interconnected whole and the spiritual quest is, as Palmer writes, an attempt to see the hidden wholeness of life.

CONCLUSION AND EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The most significant conclusion to draw from this thesis is the common vision of spirituality demonstrated by the diverse perspectives presented. The most widely shared theme relates to the interconnection of all life. Related subthemes include the importance of living in the present, the unity of self, others and nature, and the need for solitude. Each writer manifests this isolation differently, but all paths lead to the common goal of inner serenity.

To relate to the principle of Wu Wei, in Taoism, it is important to exist spiritually in harmony with nature. Parker Palmer established a relationship with the world by prayer. He stressed the need to connect to others, and nature, through community development. Keen stresses solitude through his emphasis on the "breath." However, he is connected to the universal spirit and, similar to Palmer, emphasizes the relationship between contemplation and action, the individual and social action, and community. Lindbergh recognized the need for solitude. For her, to connect with others, it was essential to be united within. Hanh tells us that it is by way of meditation that a person connects to the web of life. Solitude was essential for both Ueland and Grudin to unite with their creative spirits. The practices of T'ai-chi-Ch'uan and Aikido are typical of

active meditation.

The principal message of Taosim refers to the importance of becoming one with nature. Chief Seattle echoed this premise when he professed that all physical existence is interconnected. The main concern in the practice of Aikido is to become one with nature. For Hanh, to meditate on the interdependence of all objects, in essence, is meditation on the mind. He states that to look deeply into the mind is to see reality as an integrated whole. Spretnak concludes that nature's systems have a mutual connection, therefore, when we examine the interrelated structure of natural processes, we become integrated with the Universe and ourselves. To practice T'ai-chi-Ch'uan, according to Mackie, is to become one with the Universe and to know that you are the Tao. Klein discovered the connection between each person and his or her surroundings by the Body-Mind capability within each of us. The practice of T'ai-chi-Ch'uan is to unite the practitioner with the earth, the source of life. For the survivors of a near-death experience, he or she is part of the Universe and the earth is part of them. They all reported seeing a light that seemed to permeate everything.

> I became the light as I became one with this omnipresent light, its knowledge became my knowledge....the whole direction of mankind became evident to me (Zaleski, 1987, p. 126).

The consensus of every author and discipline explored suggested the importance of each of us to live in the present. According to Maslow, we connect to our Higher self in a moment of wholeness when we are completely absorbed in the present. In the practice of T'ai-chi-Ch'uan, the present is all the practitioner has. It is the present that provides the power. It would appear that if this principle is accepted within the school system, contemporary education would be affected generally. For Palmer, teaching should be personal. Keen stressed the need to be a person of the earth, or humus, and the importance of teaching respect towards nature. Keen and Grudin emphasized the value of the creative process in education. For Ueland, each person is born with creative talent of some form. However, she is critical of the "helpful criticism" offered in the school system. The impact of this help is the squelching of the student's creative energy. Spretnak recommends the teaching of respect for and love of nature in all the subjects in the school system, especially science.

In T'ai chi, the Body-Mind connection is eternal. It is the Tao that cannot be named. It is pure creativity. Body-Mind has the quality of acting from natural impulses, the capability of receiving impressions from external influences, the ability to respond promptly to a change in environment, the strength and union to the potency of the planet. Robert Grudin made an indirect reference to the lack

of such creativity in the current school systems when he argued that the intellectual activity of today's students is not directed towards the development of mental wholeness (Grudin, 1990, p. 39).

In his book, ***Movements Of Power*** (1990), Klein states that the pure source of life is having the power to create. It is what the Taoist call "Tao." He also suggests that "T'ai-chi reconnects you with yourself" (Klein, 1990, p. 18). T'ai-chi can lessen the tension in the student and teach ways to apply the mind earnestly and with concentration.

> Creativity is unpredictable, spontaneous. Yet, as the student allows creativity to gain more power over his life, he finds that it has intelligence, a wisdom and is meaningful. In fact, the intelligence of creativity is felt as a powerful force, permeating all of one's experience, while the activities of the mind seem to be barriers, fences, cages of the creativity. The mind serves to hold fast to a particular moment or pattern of creativity. The process of "letting go," so vital in T'ai-chi, allows creativity freer movement through one's life (p. 25).

Klein presents what he calls three T'ai-chi truths which are general and plain and upon which others are founded. To perceive without censure but with lucidity all that one is, to sense the freedom to be that person manifested without the power to coerce within that twists one into a predisposed form, and to recognize the worth and quality of the tedious process of acquiring knowledge that

leads one to this exact place and time in life. To be sensitive to the effort one exerts in remaining alive and to gain knowledge or skills, even though there is always space for improvement, T'ai-chi encourages unity.

> Once you stop separating yourself from the world, you can appreciate the world and yourself because they are identical. The past, present, future, inside, outside, self, other, mind, body coverge. This point, the place of this convergence, is creativity, the ultimate seed (p. 89).

When a student practices T'ai-chi, he or she becomes aware of how an individual's internal world is related to the external world, how this relationship became disjointed and how to reunite it. The effect of this reunion is having two far-reaching mental views to help the student understand his or her world. The body and the senses are no longer detached, therefore the student's complete world "is one ecological whole, ruled by the processes of balancing" (Klein, 1984, p. 31). The other view is that, individually, a portion of a student's world "can be observed and analyzed separately and distinctly" (p. 31).

Klein recognizes that the world each person perceives is really an image of his or her intrinsic mental or physical condition. For example, if the correlation between a person's mind and Body-Mind is based on provocation, he or she may acquire a mental impression of the world as a source of constant battle and, therefore, be unable to cope with

peace and serenity. This is also true for a person who is employed and resides in a city, and exists within a geometric environment that is almost insulated from the random forces of "Mother Nature." Any form of isolation from nature attenuates this separating the Body-Mind from an individual's true feelings. Thus, it is important for many city dwellers to take time in an environment close to nature. Time in the wilderness provides the opportunity to unwind and become one with the Universe (Gallagher, 1993, pp. 146, 148). It is recorded that Moses, Jesus and Mohammed came face to face with God in their retreats to places of seclusion. The peace and tranquility experienced in the practice of T'ai-chi-Ch'uan is similar.

> Our schools teach little true history, only the history of conquest. What of labor history? What of the history of the psychological evolution of the human mind? What of the history of belief systems, the history of lifestyles of the average person in various civilizations, etc.? Thus you are separated from true human history. Ours is a life based on separation. You are taught that your body, thoughts and feelings are "you," while your senses are "other." So you are also separated from your senses (Klein, 1984, p. 54).

Palmer takes this element of separation even further when he suggests that because the teacher is "active" and the student is "passive," the student is basically fed a diet of facts with no opportunity to make his or her own observations. To invite the students to explore the world not as something "out there," "the classroom would be

regarded as an integrated, interactive part of reality, not a place apart" (Palmer, 1983, p. 35). "Conventional education strives not to locate and understand the self in the world, but to get it out of the way" (p. 35). It separates the knower from the known.

There is another way to neutralize the effect of this programming by society. By taking a bridge across a pass to a place where nature is accepted as a random entity, and life and death are one, an individual becomes aware that the total extent of nature is alive. This path is the practice of T'ai-chi-Ch'uan.

The science of ecology defines the planet Earth as a living organism similar to the human body. However, a student in the school system is programmed to think otherwise and insight of this truth is lost. The T'ai-chi student becomes aware of the part played by the order of events in nature. The feeling of seclusion becomes less for the student and the biological sense of union with his or her surroundings is stronger. To identify with nature is to be aware of a person's immortality.

> Your identity becomes more than just your body, it becomes the planet, the process of cyclic life, the whole community of living creatures (Klein, 1984, p. 56).

Charlene Spretnak referred to this need to interact with nature and identify with the universe when she

commented, "the dynamics of the person interacting with the system and that system with others" (Spretnak, 1984, p. 23).

> It is said that the mind should be like an empty, fertile field. If a seed drops to the earth, normally it grows rapidly and well. But if the field is full of weeds, that seed will never have a chance to grow (Klein, 1984, p. 95).

It is natural for a child to be inquisitive and to be excited by something new and unusual. According to Klein, too often the school system neutralizes this essential characteristic in a child, thereby minimizing the whole system of existence to a small number of details in a standard textbook. Instead of stimulating this desire to obtain knowledge, numerous learning centres foster the position that earlier intellectual development is limited and that mankind today is intimately aware of all things. The educational system teaches a child to look at his or her world through the eyes of Newton. Any other perspective is considered a lack of knowledge or sheer madness. From infancy to puberty is a period of enchantment when the child's power to create and imagine can be put to use to make believe with natural science (p. 103). To teach a child to evaluate the relative significance of something asserted as known or existing is the means to keep his or her intellect alive, flexible and willing to take other points of view into consideration. What is required in the period of life between childhood and maturity is truth.

Palmer also maintained the importance of this message when he affirmed that the educational process must always be based on truth. To not acknowledge this requirement for truth is to limit the growth of life itself which is similar to not providing the proper nourishment for development. Youth is the season to test the waters in close emotional connections and the exchange of sentiments. Klein maintains the egos of the young are continually opposing one another instead of being genuine in their relationships with others.

In T'ai-chi, a person is at liberty to recognize as true and test the qualities of each type of intellectual development as a manner of distinctive individuality because having the power to create is recognized as a fundamental behavioural characteristic of an individual. This quality of being able to create expands the power of enthusiastic devotion in pursuit of a goal and, therefore, prepares an individual to accept the premise that living is worthwhile. This is the prolonged and focused delight in the creative process that Grudin referred to (Grudin, 1990, p. 73).

As a practical discipline, T'ai-Chi holds considerable promise for education. "Our true reality is pure creativity" (Klein, 1984, p. 144). In T'ai-chi-Ch'uan, a student equates with the absolute existence and enjoyment of a perfect world of human experience--his or her body and the plants--as brought forth by this power to create. T'ai-chi-Ch'uan

stresses the blending of the process of mental action with the forces that create the Universe rather than acting as an instrument to manage and influence the essence of life. It also promotes the quality of acting from natural feelings, the capacity to be candid and to let go of being continually conscious of what one is doing, yet holding on to the genuine awareness of the individual's own personality. The student moves with little friction into a condition of peace and accord with the environment without having to grasp for it suddenly. T'ai-chi-Ch'uan is a series of motions to enable an individual to let go of the intellect instead of enhancing it. By relinquishing the mistaken belief of being disunited, the sum total of all the student perceives, thinks, feels and indeed knows is united with the unconscious, the state of reverie is in harmony with the condition of being awake, the intellect with the body and the individual's Body-Mind with the Body-Mind of other living species (Klein, 1984, p. 145).

Keen also addresses the need for spirituality in education. In his book, *To a Dancing God* (1970), Keen reflected upon his own educational background. He proposes a few interesting concepts regarding the purpose of education and the directions to follow. For Keen, education should focus on two main concerns. The educational system must "initiate youth into the accumulated wisdom and techniques

of the cultures," and "prepare the young to create beyond the past, to introduce novelty and utilize freedom" (Keen, 1970, p. 41). The latter will necessitate an interplay between what is remote and abstract, and what is personal and concrete to the child. When this physical and autobiographical aspect of education is neglected, then creativity is lost and the education received by the child will be conservative at best, or perhaps even reactionary. Keen affirms that there must be freedom beyond conformity and rebellion.

Keen recalls that he finished graduate school with knowledge and convictions but he lacked wisdom and feelings. It was after he graduated that his education indeed began. He emphasized the need for an educational process that stresses creativity through what is intimate, proximate, sensuous, autobiographical and personal. The effect of this would be the enhancement of the quality of the end-product of our school system (p. 41).

The search for a meaningful Moral and Religious education for the students of today should be of great concern to the school system. My research for this thesis does not provide a clear blue-print for a new curriculum. However, it does point to a broad approach which includes insights from other traditions and from contemporary perspectives on spirituality. This thesis suggests that such

an approach is feasible given their common ground. Moreover, it will be important to avoid replacing the old structure by new dogmas. There is need to introduce a new course or programme respecting the open-ended nature of the spiritual journey. Fundamentally, there is need for a programme of study that will give students the opportunity to address the spiritual dimension of their own lives, others, and the Universe. As Parker Palmer (1983) writes, the challenge is to open "the eyes of the heart" to discover "the hidden wholeness of the world" (pp. xi, xii).

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