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HOLOTROPIC LEARNING

The Language of Holotropic Light: Unpacking the Experience

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
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INTERDISCIPLINARY ARTS AND SCIENCES

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ABSTRACT

A powerful pedagogy provided by direct personal experience anchors cognitive thinking with experiential impressions in the rubric of Holotropic Learning. Beginning with a near-death experience in 1972 and continuing with many Holotropic Breathwork sessions this research study explicates an experiential contemporary rite of passage including a ten-day wilderness quest incorporating four days of fasting with sleep deprivation in solitude with nature. These three pathways used to enter holotropic (non-ordinary) states of consciousness combined with subject-oriented application and in-depth examination form to concretize a triple-tier learning process. This unique triple-tier learning process with the author as the experiencer brings focus to various approaches accessing non-ordinary (altered, shamanic) states of consciousness. The contextual essay outlines research grounded in the Transpersonal paradigm. Holotropic theory, together with a cartography of consciousness as postulated by Transpersonal founder, researcher and theorist Stanislav Grof, M.D. integrating ancient spiritual practices with modern consciousness research and Depth Psychology provides the conceptual framework for the study. An in-depth examination form using heuristic methodology offers a qualitative research model and the Constitution of the Iroquois Confederacy is proffered as a working indigenous exemplar of human potential. An extensive review of available literature reveals little evidence of formalized, subjective, anecdotal data collection of holotropic Learning using this triple-tier approach. Experiences of bilocation have been reported

throughout history, usually occurring as a result of a consistent and intense daily spiritual practice and treated as a profound religious experience. Holotropic learning outlines methodologies which make bilocation available experientially to those seeking. A manuscript entitled: The Language of Holotropic Light: Unpacking the Experience explicates the completed contemporary rite of passage and includes observations from the six-month preparation, ten-day wilderness quest, and full year of process integration. This study researches the following questions: 1 - How feasible is completion of the proposed model, and 2 - What are the ramifications, consequences and social relevance of eliciting bilocation experiences through a rite of passage. The author describes development in personal physiological benefits, an increased emotional well-being and a deepening sense of spirituality.

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Soon after I entered The Union Institute's program my long time four-legged companion left this world. He was a tri-color Pembroke Welsh Corgi who had chosen me some ten years earlier as I sat in a field, with about 80 Corgi pups, at a meet. He taught me many things not the least of which was the discipline of meandering. Meandering forces slowness, not missing a scent, he sometimes returned for a second sniff. Using Heuristic methodology, which he clearly knew innately, taking time, immersing in the subject matter, became crucial to my process, and I thank him.

The paperback, "Mister God, This Is Anna," by Fynn touched my very soul. Reading for this diagnosed dyslexic became a breeze. The gift of a committee member and Anam Cara (soul friend), and I thank her.

Committee members who were passionate, supportive, steadfast, challenging, and always available - I thank you all.

To an adopted family who offered me room and many privileges. A mom and dad, their two young children and cat provided security, a place to simply be - thank you.

And to the divine inspirational energy that is ever present throughout this omnipotent universe, although there were times when I just simply wasn't listening - it is with profound gratitude that I place my hands together, and bow.

•
For my mother
in honor of her mother
and for our mother
the earth

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PART A: Contextual Essay

CHAPTER ONE: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

I am compelled to begin this review of the literature with a disclaimer and solicit your indulgence while identifying, categorizing and expressing the context or frame of reference within which this Project Demonstrating Excellence (PDE) belongs. Evidence of the transformational power derived from direct personal experience comes from a wide range of sources spanning all of human history. My personal experiences are no exception. In point of fact, my personal experience is the driving force for carrying out this research. Experiencing such a profound, life-altering phenomena as bilocation through a near-death experience set me on a course of discovery. I felt like a fish out of water and was void of context. This near-death experience in 1972 unveiled a depth of unidentified knowledge which is met in the bilocation phenomenon..

Initially important was the attending surgeon's declaration of witness. He later suggested I research biofeedback, which led to yoga, transcendental meditation, vipassana meditation and other somatic practices. Then in 1989, a colleague invited me to experience a Holotropic Breathwork session designed to enter non-ordinary states of consciousness. Although the session content was different, the experiential bilocation phenomenon present reminded me of my near-death experience.

Completion of a Transpersonal Training, created and taught by Stanislov Grof, M.D., provided fundamental theory, new to my ears, satisfying all my questions. A few years later I was introduced to in-depth heuristic methodology and a context for

analysis became available.

With self as the subject (experiencer), observer, and analyst, part of the contextual fabric is effected by my abilities. This aspect will be addressed initially. Another aspect is the body of work identified as near-death experiences (NDE) because that is the term assigned to my experience from 1972. Holotropic theory, grounded in the transpersonal paradigm, links ancient spiritual practices with modern consciousness research and depth psychology. These elements become part of the context as they provide the theoretical foundation for understanding experiences in non-ordinary states of consciousness. A contemporary rite of passage, including preparation, a wilderness journey incorporating fasting and sleep deprivation in solitude in nature and the focus of this study, requires a context of initiation rites, and shamanism, and the experience of bilocation calls for examination of mystical events. An in-depth evaluation protocol provided a thorough investigation, analysis and explication.

Limited by the scope of this anecdotal research but acknowledging the vast body of data to which this study is linked provides for depth, breadth and a fully dimensional perspective to emerge. It is important to note that self-focused explication from multi-holotropic experiences with in-depth heuristic examination was unavailable in the literature and is therefore considered unique in this work.

Self

It is important to recognize that anecdotal research is only as good as the observer's language resources, for within the english vernacular hides the tyranny of words. Explication of unusual phenomena demands authenticity yet language is in

cultural deficit, particularly when describing profound, spiritually unique events. Both my personal training and education in the sciences and subsequent years in polymer research, culminating in the issuance of several patents, provide me with an affidavit of scientific protocol. It is from this inculcated scientific culture that my skepticism toward inner culture enlightenment springs. This research study must therefore answer my own criticisms initially before I can begin to explicate to an outer community. I must be satisfied from within that language describing content, observations and analyses are as appropriate and thorough as possible. This beginning place causes me much consternation. Had my attending physician in 1972 (NDE) not acknowledged that other patients experiencing similar traumas often report such experiences I would simply have appeared to have suffered a psychotic episode.

For this study I am far less interested in proving or disproving whether my consciousness left my body, or whether the experience was real or a figment of my imagination, and much more interested in the transformative consequences or the ideal of achieving "peace on earth." For if the transformative effects show consistency, peace becomes a potential reality made real. This "beyond experience" expressed from each of the three modalities experienced; near-death, Holotropic Breathwork and wilderness journey strikes me as revolutionary, yet humbling, at the same time.

More than twenty years elapsed before I began to speak of my near-death. My hesitation in explication originated with an absence of language and then in finding ways to describe my experiences accurately. These were virtually impossible to find. Describing my experience as a near-death for example, when all my senses dictated

that I was being born brought profound calamity, forcing silent retreat. My words frightened listeners.

For this research a full year's sabbatical occurred before writing began explicating The Language of Holotropic Light: Unpacking the Experience. A heuristic methodology, appropriate for the investigation of human experience, provides a formalized, in-depth way to observe immeasurable, experiential and unusual phenomena (Moustakas, 1990). This PDE is therefore rich in process methodologies designed to recognize unconventional experience. Its triple-tier approach unique, with self-focus, multi-holotropic access methodologies and an in-depth discovery protocol provide me a level of personal satisfaction as these bring me into touch with my experience.

Near-Death

A recent Gallup poll reported some 13 million Americans have experienced a near-death. Recent television shows heralding sensationalism offer proof positive of the after-life. Few who have reported their near-death experiences ascribe to this way of thinking however. The International Association for Near-Death Studies (IANDS) was formed in 1981 "to enrich our understanding of the nature and scope of human consciousness and its relationship to life and death." Bruce Greyson, M.D. (University of Virginia), oversees a 300-person research pool for the organization. Studying near-death experiences falls into two categories; the technological aspect of scientific discovery, and hence incorporating reproducibility, and the process of profound life changing transformative discoveries (Greyson, 1984). Using imaging techniques during laboratory testing, scientists are linking glutamate and ketamine

brain excretions, occurring as life-ends, to the origination of hallucinations of tunnel-like light (Blackmore 1996). True or not, the life-altering transformative experiences reported from experiencers is dramatic.

Recent research is discovering not all near-death experiences are bathed in the light (Atwater, 1999). Whether the experiences are drawn from encountering a profound light or a menacing darkness, the resultant personal transformations are comparable however. Often disguised by language, culture, ethnic belief systems it is only over the past two decades, under the rubric of a transpersonal paradigm that wholistic, transformational experiences have begun to be reviewed, analyzed and catalogued for their content and outcomes. Using terms of faith or cultural viewpoints as descriptors often exacerbate the difficulty of comparative examination (Atwater, 2000).

In 1969, Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, M.D. wrote On Death and Dying and provided a major reference work on death, relating it to living life fully. Her publication brought the subject matter of death and dying into the public light, on to the table for scrutiny, amidst defensiveness and hostility from her peers. Growing out of the Chicago's Billings Hospital's experimental programs, five stages of death were identified as; denial and isolation, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Her work became crucial to the development of grief and bereavement programs. Kubler-Ross paved the way for Thanatology to be more readily acceptable and made room for Ray Moody's book, Life after Life published in 1975, to receive acclaim.

Moody's book was the first to focus on the process of death and contained

more than a hundred reports from patients who had experienced "clinical death" who were later revived. His book outlined similarities experienced, in particular; the effects of a bright light; journeying through a tunnel; and life-review, which culminated in a newly found sense of well-being for the experiencers. His findings provided new material for physicians and ministers to use when working with the terminally ill, and he suggested that psychologists and psychiatrists may need new methodologies when working with emotional disturbances "if the mind can exist apart from the body" (p.184).

In 1991, Melvin Morse, M.D. published his ground breaking book, Closer to the Light, reflecting research from hundreds of interviews with children who had been pronounced "clinically dead" and returned to life. Establishing the existence of out-of-body and bilocation experiences, he provided an abundance of powerful data supporting the existence of the after-life. This study, informed by young children who reported experiences of clairvoyance, out-of-body travel, telepathic communications, and encounters with dead friends and relatives included powerful transformational descriptions of life changes, life acceptance and living fully moment-to-moment. It is within these transformational consequences, that a newly developed awareness of a greater omnipotent Source beyond self exists. Realization that there is a purpose to life, a highly spiritual purpose then becomes powerful and life changing.

Transformational near-death experiences can be embodied in a sense of profound light or emanate from a darkness. Until recently the standard near-death experience was described basically as a movement towards a light, through a tunnel,

observing deceased friends or relatives, returning to life with a sense of divine oneness. A knowledge of everlasting joy, resulting in a change of occupation seeking a life of service was oftentimes an outcome. Evidence is now mounting that those who had difficult, unpleasant or hellish experiences of a darkness also undergo similar powerful transformations. It is as if it were the direct experience of bilocation, in and of itself, which acts as the catalyst for transformation (Rommer, 2000. Wilson, 2000. Atwater, 2000).

A plethora of near-death books have recently been published echoing similar stories of transformation and underscoring that the gift of living can be learned from the experience of dying. Whether we actually release "molecules of the mind" during the death process pales into unimportance when compared to the remarkable life changes which experiencers describe (Pert, 1997).

Not everyone would agree that the life changes experienced and consequent actions were remarkable however. Professionals, highly educated, pillars of their communities, living a high quality of life in suburban neighborhoods, rejecting their life styles in favor of servant leadership or a tour in the Peace Corps often bought bewilderment from loved ones and family members. Within this transformational experience come profound philosophical questions such as, "What is my place in this universe?, Who am I?, Where am I going and why?" Whether experiencers are on the lunatic fringe or not, their stories are validated by their transformative life changes (Ring, 2000).

Kenneth Ring presented data in book form explicating near-death experiences

from those born congenitally blind. Descriptions from the near-death researchers indicated experiencers perceptive skills were exacerbated to a point of "seeing," not simply underscoring a general sense of knowing, but describing a deep and inexplicable newly acquired profound knowledge which Ring calls "mindsight" (1999).

As with any anecdotal evidence the weight a reader attaches to it will depend on how much faith they have that the experiencer is reporting true experiences and that the author is intentionally reporting with accuracy and honesty. Near-death researchers are the object of extraordinary criticisms, oftentimes from within their own discipline which requires their work contain rigorous peer review, cross-checking and objective empirical protocol.

As with any practice closely related to the field of religion, observers can easily use the coming after-life metaphor as a restrictive, controlling device. The philosophy the leading a "good" life will provide an individual with a "good after-life," while the "bad" life is rewarded with a "bad death" becomes threatening. Such experiences can become a battleground for theorists, belief systems and alter egos that are uncomfortable with the existence of mystery and exalt the idea of a judgement day (Sabom, 1998. Symes, 1998).

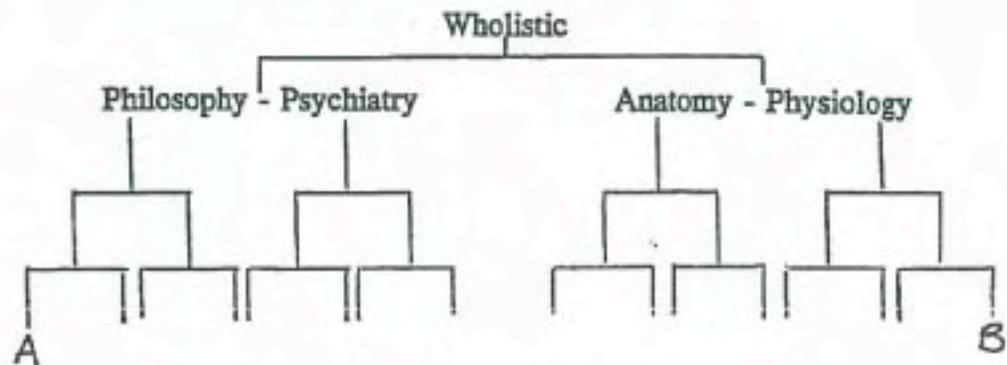
Publications are now appearing which continually support the premise that near-death and mystical experiences proffer new meaning for our lives (Berman, 1998). A study over a four year period of 50,000 terminally ill patients, observed by hundreds of physicians and nurses in the United States and India, underscores the

illusion of fearing death (Osis, 1997). Patients described a welcoming white light, experienced personal reconciliation, and felt the presence of their dearly departed loved ones close by.

Ancient indigenous cultures have rich methods for honoring their dead. Often buried with belongings construed as essential for the journey ahead, the Tibetan, Egyptian and Mayan Books of the Dead, in use for thousands of years, offer ritual and ceremony to assist both the living and the dead during their transitions. A wholistic concept describing a continuing transformative journey of life to after-life inherent in indigenous cultures.

Transpersonal

Wholistic thinking was practically displaced by the Cartesian reasoning that the mind "consists entirely in thinking, and for its existence has no need of place, and is not dependent on any material thing" (Descartes, 1637). This split between the body and the mind relegated the activities of the mind to philosophers and psychiatrists and those of the body to anatomists and physiologists ushering in an era of prolific bifurcation and the rise of branches of independent autonomous disciplines. Wholistic thought from the Renaissance period virtually disappeared. Bifurcating wholistic learning led to subsequent bifurcations in infinite regress. Division upon division over the last three hundred and fifty years has resulted in a debilitating maze presented by the following graphic:



Under these circumstances, research is quickly self-contained and isolated. A is far from B for example. Publishing data without context becomes narrowly precise and a self-assured myopia. Disciplines operating in isolation are therefore disconnected or dissociated from the whole. Ending the Cartesian dualism means physicists rediscover emergence. Quantum mechanics forces physicists to become philosophers again by forcing discussion of the question, "does the moon exist when we're not looking?" i.e. does death erase reality. Physicians are unable to provide analysis of herbs such as St. John's Wort or Kava Kava is an example of narrow precision. Western medical protocols focus closely and primarily through the scientific paradigm. Patients with HIV or terminal cancer are frustrated with this narrowly defined situation and look to ancient healing traditions for solace. Ancient healing techniques and modern drugs can be diagnostically contraindicated however, creating a powerful political struggle involving government approval protocols, manufacturing oversight and adequate available information. In China, the understanding of modern medicinal protocols co-mingle with traditional healing techniques, often prescribing a blend of ancient and modern wisdom (Moyers, 1998).

By way of illustration, in Dr. Frankenstein, author Mary Shelley (1818) raised an important philosophical question in stitching unblemished parts of humans together; whether this newly created creature had a soul or not. This place of soul, spirit, consciousness, God, or the Source, brings focus to numerous disparate, scattered words. Describing a supreme being as a vibrational complex is paradoxical. In light of current medical technology, recent organ transplants, and the grafting of a human hand, this question becomes profound, bringing theologians and physicians into a challenging arena. Data are beginning to surface from organ transplant recipients regarding changes in their behaviors, food preferences, clothing desires and even language (colloquialism) use reflecting the transplanted organ's "memory" (Pearsall, 1999). Can consciousness therefore reach beyond the mind offering radical divination from Cartesian-Newtonian conceptualizations?

Reports from experiencers who have described spiritual dimensions of great proportion express the idea of a superior creative intelligence, a universal omnipotence, an understanding that something much larger than self exists, and that in some way, each individual is innately connected with that Source. The ramifications of direct experiences are both rich and powerful and offer accessibility for all. Feelings of oneness, unconditional love, or pure consciousness are reported by those who have experienced this supreme principle or Source (Grof 1985. Vaughan, 1985).

In fiction writing, Mister God. This is Anna, (1974) is an international best selling book about a young child, Anna, who lived in the east-end of London. She is

blessed with an uncanny knack of exquisite common sense, simplistic logic, and theoretical excellence, understanding the purpose and essence of life implicitly. The potential for human beings through direct connection to the Source as proffered by Anna portends promise for all mankind. Biblical text suggests heaven is achievable if approached as a child. Hindu teaching refers to the place of newness as a tabula rasa, a beginners mind. The interaction between Fynn, who found her living on the city streets and took her in, and Anna is an explication of unconditional love interwoven in a series of question and answer periods. A manifestation of "heaven" on earth, this unconditional friendship with Fynn began when she was four and a half and concluded when she died before her eighth birthday.

The search for meaning is described as a primary force and as such underscores our every action. This search includes the experiences of death and suffering and is a motivating principle behind many great discoveries about the human psyche and the laws of nature (Frankl, 1969). An adventure of life incorporates the experience of separation, initiation and return, the basic components outlined in rites of passage, (Campbell, 1968). Genuine human enlightenment is ensconced through initiation (Eliade, 1967). To experience initiation is to explore the hidden, the miraculous, the unknown and sometimes dangerous elements within us. We fear what we do not know. This is a defensive fear, in the sense that it is a protection, a shield. We are unable to develop our talents as long as we hold on to the fears. As a result, that which is most noble in us remains inaccessible. By protecting against the hell within, the heaven within is obscured (Maslow, 1969).

Oftentimes use of the term God is an insufficient gloss when describing direct experiences of profound events. Descriptions such as absolute consciousness or universal mind also seem to be inadequate to convey the aesthetic fullness and spiritual richness of the experience. For experiencers it is obvious that "those who know do not speak, and those who speak do not know" (Grof, 1998). This all powerful, omniscient, verbiage resonates antidotally when observing proselytizing religious zealots intellectually frame their definition of God. Experiencers often resist public discussion simply because of this newly acquired sense of primal connection with what can only be designated as the Source.

Grof's revolutionary work, initially with LSD (Lysergic Acid Diethylamide) and subsequently with development of Holotropic Breathwork has provided a "modern corroboration of the perennial philosophy" (Wilbur, 1998). After LSD became an illegal substance, Grof searched ancient practices and combined a pranayamic type of breathwork supported with indigenous, cultural music thus creating a modern setting of ritual and ceremony providing an opportunity to experience bilocation. Participants often discuss their experiential and observer roles. Under the rubric of psychiatry however, experiences of unusual phenomenon such as near-death, out-of-body or of bilocation are held pathological, often times medicated, occasionally institutionalized and rarely heard. Only in the past few years has psychiatry included a category of Spiritual Emergency in its Diagnostic Standards Manual (DSM) offering hope that practitioners from the medical profession are recognizing the impact of unusual phenomenon on their patients (Mack, 1995).

Transpersonal theoreticians vary in their thinking, the common thread of basic wisdom however acknowledges the existence of a higher self, or spiritual Source. Their disagreements come when creating methodologies and theories which focus on connecting with, or reaching, this higher plateau. Philosopher, and prolific writer Ken Wilbur proposes a model which embodies the developmental designs of Piaget, Maslow, and Kohlberg with contemplative teachings (Murphy, 1992). He suggests the real solution to the mind-body problem is not solved through mental understanding of dualistic inter-relationships but rather through the radical transcendence of all dualism in non-dual awareness "whereupon the problem is radically dis-solved" (1996). This is an important postulation. Imagining transcendence as a constant state of being is difficult however. Glimpsing places of radical transcendence seem much more probable. Pragmatically even yogis must eat. Even if humans had nothing else to do but concentrate on the art of transcendence, living radically transcendent seems to be unattainable, perhaps reserved for the province of death.

Experiencers of holotropic states of consciousness describe the feelings associated with physiological and mental letting go or surrender. Movement into a place of fragmentation (bilocation) before finding a new wholeness often punctuated their experiences. Experiences of fragmentation bring question from mental health professionals of possible re-traumatization to those with unresolved issues from abuse. Instead of re-traumatization occurring however, the experiencer perceives from a new bilocated viewpoint which offers another perspective. The old form of retention can begin to disappear in light of a new emergent form based on the new perspective. In

this manner experiencers, at their own pace, begin to shed or integrate their stray fragments.

Viewed in this light, energetically, experiencers resemble small universes, abundant with molecular structures, vibrating at differing speeds. In places where collections of molecules appear in a cluster, a major memory or event may be patterned. But in a situation of trauma, where metaphorically all molecules have been ejaculated in an explosion, bits and pieces of molecules may simply be too far away to participate in the collective. In holotropic learning experiencers can release or integrate these bits and pieces. Re-experiencing the trauma from a different perspective or cultural time-frame permits a previously held limited thought to release in favor of an unlimited potential. Moving toward a sense of wholeness through integration and resolution then becomes both metaphorical and literal in reality (Grof and Grof, 1990. Talbot, 1992).

Still, the majority of transpersonal researchers are reluctant to consider experiences outside the realm of contemplative practices and appear scientific in their approach, blending Eastern religions and traditions with the development of Western psychology (Wilbur, 1981). This blend of current agrarian traditions with industrial psychology ignores the important re-connection to shamanic wisdom and is out of context. Eastern traditions have retained much of their ancient spiritual practices but lack an industrial perspective. Western civilization is polar opposite. Comparison blending of Eastern with Western must occur in context by relating each back to their own Source (p.17).

Levels, or stages of consciousness are postulated by a variety of mystical and spiritual traditions suggesting the amount of practice and consequent outcomes are proportional and directly related. Academic protocol is busy developing theories of metaphysics, consciousness, cosmology in an attempt to design a philosophy of everything as a race to develop a theory of wholeness is paramount. Unappealing to the novice and foreign to the holotropic experience, academic researchers create mental models of how things were, are, or need to be. Attempts to create a grand unified scheme of things contradicts the idea of an unfolding universe and definition eliminates the potential for mystery (Grof, 1998, Wilbur, 1996). Near-death experiences, spiritual emergence, kundalini awakenings and alien abductions are however becoming too numerous to ignore as anomalies, requiring the most judicious theorists to re-examine initiatory experiences and their potential, both from an intentional and spontaneous viewpoint.

Experiencers like me drown in english vernacular. External observers, those unexperienced in unusual phenomenon are missing essential elements. Each individual must experience for themselves in order to know. The meaning and purpose of life then becomes an evolution of consciousness culminating in a recognition of oneness by the experiencer (Wilber, 1996).

Grof stands virtually alone in his quest describing the healing (defragmentation) potential offered through initiatory experiences and available through holotropic learning. His simple, uncomplicated, cartography of consciousness is both explicit and innate, encouraging spiritual intent, sacred setting, a willingness,

and a basic understanding that the participants inner director knows the way (1998). He presents a unified, comprehensive model of human consciousness that explains behavior, evolution, and personality that supports mind-body connection based on thousands of experiences (1985). His cartography was developed from direct experiences and augmented through mental understanding.

A body of work being developed from the several hundred trained holotropic practitioners worldwide will no doubt bring new compelling data into the light over the next few decades. My own personal ten year practice has revealed numerous examples of physiological healing, increasing emotional well-being, and life changes incorporating less personal greed, a developing living simplicity, organic food consumption and an increase in the desire to live a life of service to community.

Validation of Grof's cartography appears from places least likely. Discussing the relationship between art and science for example blends creativity of the mind and of nature. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin stated that the most fundamental aspect of the universe is that it contains an inherent tendency to produce entities that are increasingly complex and conscious. Smashing the atom has revealed the existence of smaller and smaller fragments. The system of quantum physics treats the totality of existence, including matter and consciousness, as an unbroken, indivisible wholeness. Humanity has always sensed that wholeness or integrity is an absolute necessity to make life worth living. Yet, over the years society has generally lived in fragmentation. Collective thought and knowledge are so automatic that we are in large part controlled by them and have subsequently lost our sense of authenticity, freedom

and order (Bohm, 1996).

Viewing the universe as a three dimensional projection and no more real than a hologram provides a context for mythological and unusual occurrences to be explained (Talbot, 1992). It is as if each individual is an enfolded reflection of the universe miniaturized. The "implicate order" theory suggests that any independent element in our universe contains within it the sum of all elements, of all existence itself and is embedded in the teachings of the new sciences (Bohm, 1980).

"Formative causation" proposes that self-organizing systems are shaped by morphic fields which contain an inherent memory provided by the process of morphic resonance whereby each kind of thing has a collective memory. The form and function of all living things are passed to succeeding generations by these morphic fields that extend through space and time (Sheldrake, 1995). Relationship can now be viewed through a molecular approach. The collective memory or unconscious is not a concrete object. It cannot be held, seen, touched, smelled or tasted. It is invisible, like the wind but its effects can be seen. Science cannot study the unconscious directly. Proof of its existence can be found in the complex workings of human beings (Jung, 1959).

Throughout history mankind has searched for ways to express the natural elements and over the years an extraordinary wealth of mathematical relationships and sequences with application in botany, biology, physics, music and art. The Greeks were fascinated with the Golden Ratio for example. Fibonacci discovered a pattern when seeking information regarding rabbit production predictability. His predictability

ratios are used in the physical sciences, business and economics and education. According to Albert Einstein, patterns or ways of nature are available to those who simply sit and observe their surroundings.

Chaos and complexity systems theories revealed in quantum physics, evolution, computation and knowledge are interrelated and intertwined. Through the phenomena of quantum interference parallel universes are discretely detectible. Connecting and relating these elements offers scientific evidence regarding the comprehension of nature and the significance of human life (Deutsch, 1997).

A survey of chaos theory presented as a metaphorical mirror projects a world of hidden turbulence. The advent of the computer has permitted chaos and fractal theoretical models to be fully viewed. As navigation of the turbulent world from submicroscopic realms to distant galaxies occurs fractal dimensions, strange attractors, holograms, soliton bubbles, bifurcation, quantum phase locking, co-evolution of species provides a mystical perception of the whole. Chaos theory is therefore God (Briggs, 1990). At the very least cosmic consciousness becomes divine illumination (Bucke, 1991).

Western civilization is teetering on the brink of creating a theory of everything and yet, as Grof postulates, we already innately know it. The idea that we are a reflection of the universe argues that we are complete and whole. Our inability to access this stored knowledge lies at the root of multi-theoretical and conceptual creations.

Shamanism

Michael Harner and Mircea Eliade, both considered modern day experts on

shamanism offer the following definition: "a shaman is a man or woman who 'journeys' in an altered state of consciousness usually induced by rhythmic drumming or other types of percussion sound," (Harner, 1988). Carlos Castaneda (1987) indicates that a sorcerer (like a shaman) journeys to "non-ordinary reality in an altered state of consciousness." Harner refers to that state of consciousness as the shamanic state of consciousness. Grof, refers to it as a holotropic state of consciousness differentiating and eliminating pathological experiences derived from an altered consciousness caused by infections, cerebral traumas or other degenerative circulatory problems (1998). Others refer to the condition as simply an altered or non-ordinary state of consciousness.

Shamanism has existed for more than 60,000 years and originated in the Ural Mountains in Russia (Wolf, 1991). Shamanic tradition is passed down the family lineage from elder to initiate. They use sound and vibration in their rituals and understand the power of sacred plants and sacred places. They are able to enter a trance state and cross time and space sometimes changing form (shape shifting). They are generally visionary and although their abilities were familial, development of them was enhanced by near-death experiences (Wolf, 1991). As healers and visionaries, the shaman were able to alter their consciousness, to see from differing perspectives and bring a sense of well being to the tribal community.

The mastery of altering internal bodily functions, such as heat has been attributed to yogis, Eskimo angaloks and Tibetan lamas, and has also been observed among shamans of the Solomon Islands, Sumatra, the Malay archipelago and various

North American Indian tribes (Eliade, 1962,). The Pavioso shamans of North America for example put burning embers in their mouths and touch red-hot irons, Kung bushmen dance ecstatically in fires and Araucanian shamans of Chile walk barefoot on fire without being burnt (Murphy, 1992). Indigenous cultures used many methods for connecting to their Source, the Creator within a context of ritual and ceremony.

Sri Swami Rama, a yogi, was an invited guest of the Menninger Clinic participating in biofeedback research in the 1970s. He was able to reduce his respiration dramatically, at will and although he had expressed an ability to stop and start his heartbeat, the Menninger staff declined the opportunity. He currently teaches and writes from the Himalayan Institute with primary focus on the benefits of yoga.

Ancient indigenous and spiritual practices often used a combination of sacred place and sacred intent, with fasting, sleep deprivation, drumming and rattling, as expressions of ritual and ceremony. As these practices were relegated to indigenous storytelling their ramifications and consequences are sparse in literature. Indigenous cultures integrated their life styles and lived wholistically. Primitive and simple-minded are not synonymous (Eliade, 1968). Rules of law and government were integrated with ritual and ceremony unlike our western dogma of separation of church and state.

Heuristic Methodology

Polanyi, a chemist turned philosopher raised the role of personal knowledge to a science. Learning to be a scientist does not occur by studying test tubes but by apprenticing with someone who teaches learners how to know things in a scientific

way thereby developing a trust in the tacit dimension (1983). The heuristic research model provides a process for evaluating personal knowledge experiences of unusual, experiential, tacit phenomena thoroughly and academically with integrity.

Exemplar

The Great Law of Peace was brought by Degonawida, the Peacemaker when he came among the warring Mohawk initiating peace in the tribe an estimated five hundred years before the birth of Christ. Four more tribes joined and the Iroquois Confederacy was established. A joint language and trading laws were developed. The lands occupied were from what is now North Carolina, north to the Canadian border and from the eastern coast to Ohio. A way of life was established honoring the Creator as the primary principle and sacred intent became inculcated into their daily practice providing our founding fathers with a working exemplar of democracy in action. The Great Law of Peace of the Iroquois Confederation lists 117 wampum or points of law charting ways of right-minded living. The hierarchy included a place for both male and female and ultimately, it was the women who were charged with holding the process. A peaceful people, numbering in the hundreds of thousands, living in harmony with themselves, with nature and with their Creator, until the invading Europeans arrived (Gayanerekowa, 1993).

Bilocation

In the contemplative traditions bilocation, the simultaneous appearance of a saint, yogi or spiritual master in more than one location, has been reported throughout history. As a principal of Charism, a Roman Catholic term used to describe special experiences or abilities generally associated with a life of prayer, bilocation is listed

in the New Catholic Encyclopedia and is rarely associated with ordinary people but rather with sages, wise men and women and potential spiritual leaders. Spontaneous eruptions from kundalini awakenings or demonic possessions are seldom viewed in the same light and are often diagnosed pathological. Experiences of bilocation are reported extensively in Taoism, Tibetan Buddhism and Sufism as well as Jewish mysticism (Murphy, 1992).

SUMMARY

The literature review for this Project Demonstrating Excellence reveals a compelling, rich, and generous history within which the focus of this research dwells. Self-focused experiences from a near-death, Holotropic Breathwork, and contemporary rite of passage demand thorough investigation, analysis and explication are unavailable. A review of modern writings about near-death experiences reveal extraordinary transformative elements reported by children with terminal illness and the congenitally blind. Pragmatic methodologies essential in bereavement programs, grief counseling and other issues of death and dying were formulated due to the influence of Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, M.D. Recent research has revealed numerous examples of near-death experiences incorporating an intense light or a menacing darkness as catalysts for transformation and reconciliation.

The transpersonal paradigm provides a broad theoretical framework for wholistic approaches and strategies to re-connect with our Source of inspiration. The Grof cartography of consciousness offers construct for healing potential. The authors own ten-year holotropic practice provides numerous examples of physiological healing, growing emotional well-being, and developing sense of spirituality.

Shamanism and initiation rites provide examples of ancient indigenous peoples extraordinary abilities to master of their own bodily functions. Blending this ancient wisdom with modern consciousness research and depth psychology brings new focus to experiential bilocation previously reserved for religious contemplatives or wise sages. Heuristic methodology provides an opportunity to examine experiential data in-depth and the Constitution of the Iroquois Confederation is proffered as a working indigenous exemplar.

CHAPTER TWO: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

Aboriginal cultures routinely used methods to enter holotropic states of consciousness as part of their living traditions, celebrating birth, puberty, marriage, elderhood, and death as well as natural events such as crop planting and harvesting or celebrating the moon phases and equinoxes. Some of the more traditional ways to access these holotropic states of consciousness are: meditation, prayer, fasting, chanting, drumming, rattling, dancing, temperature extremes (sweat lodge), use of sacred plants (peyote or ayahuasca), flagellation (pain), sleep deprivation, controlled breathing techniques, or trance dancing.

The modern transpersonal paradigm, with its origins in Transpersonal Psychology, provides a broad framework within which holotropic learning resides. With behavioral-experimental being termed the first force of psychology, psychoanalytic the second, and humanistic the third, Victor Frankl, Stanislav Grof, Abraham Maslow, and Anthony Sutich coined the name Transpersonal and described a fourth force of psychology. Briefly defined the four forces are as follows:

Behavioral-Experimental, the first force.

The human individual is treated as passive, lacking experiential depth, an entity that simply responds to stimuli impinging upon it from the external physical and social world. Only that which is observable and whose dimensions can be corroborated by another observer is permitted. Human behavior is therefore the objective focus of the behaviorist. Human experience is dismissed as subjective, unmeasurable and not the substance science is made of.

Psychoanalytic, the second force.

In this scenario the person is given more depth. Not only is the role of conscious experience discussed but the realms of Freud's personal unconscious and Jung's collective unconscious are acknowledged as well. The human being becomes more whole but is still treated as passive, one that responds to stimuli from the inside - current emotions, past experience, unconscious motives for example, rather than the external pushes and pulls. An analyst may refer to the punitive nature of toilet training or the subtle empowerment of the mother archetype, for example.

Humanistic, the third force.

Here the fullest range of human potential is entertained and open to investigation. Of the wide range of approaches, existential-phenomenological psychology remains the most central. Experiencing a different way of being in the world, not simply another way of thinking. Here, the human individual and the environment became inseparable, intertwined, and complex.

Transpersonal, the fourth force.

Transcendent or transpersonal experiences were not still not addressed however. They were not really "experience" (composed of thoughts and emotions) but rather known only to the experiencer while relating to a unitive space. Mystics throughout the ages have used parables, poems or imagery to induce the kind of awareness which connects with this transcendent space. Sutich and Maslow may be regarded as the midwives for the articulation of the transpersonal viewpoint as is evidence by their participation in the creation of a Transpersonal journal. Certainly Maslow's 1967 lecture: The Farther Reaches of Human Potential is generally regarded as the first public presentation of the emergence of Transpersonal

Psychology. This presentation raised the perspective of optimal states and optimal values extending far beyond ordinary limits of ego boundaries of time and space. Huxley's term Transhumanistic referred to that which motivates, gratifies, and activates the fortunate, developed, self-actualizing person beyond our ordinary boundaries to transcend the limits of the ego-self.

Peak experiences and transcendent values relate directly to the important bridge between modern science and ancient mystical and spiritual traditions. Maslow used a hierarchal model and conceptualized such values as love, sexuality and friendship as ranging upward to a rarified atmosphere. He conceptualized a healthy society as one that possesses substantial "growth-fostering potential," and that by acknowledging the essential role of transcendent awareness in understanding the nature of human beings provided a broader concept of objectivity. He speaks of sacralizing everyday life as a way of enhancing and fostering maximum growth and higher values. He laid the groundwork and exalted the population to reach full-potential.

Sutich documented the history of this transpersonal emergence in 1969 as follows:

"Transpersonal psychology is the name of an emerging force in the psychology field by a group of psychologists and professional men and women from other fields who are interested in the ultimate human capacities and potentialities that have no systematic place in positivistic or behavioral theory, classical psychoanalytic, or humanistic psychology. The emerging transpersonal psychology is concerned specifically with the empirical scientific study of, and responsible implementation of, the findings relevant to becoming, individual and species-wide meta-needs, ultimate values, unitive

consciousness, peak experiences, B-values, ecstasy, mystical experiences, awe, being, self-actualization, essence, bliss, wonder, ultimate meaning, transcendence of the self, spirit, oneness, cosmic awareness, individual and species-wide synergy, maximal sensory awareness, responsiveness and expression, maximum interpersonal encounter, sacralization of everyday life, transcendental phenomena, cosmic self-humor and playfulness, and related concepts, experiences, and activities. As a definition, this formulation is to be understood as subject to optimal individual or group interpretations, either wholly or in part with regard to the acceptance of its content as essentially naturalistic, theistic, supernaturalistic, or any other designated classification.

When the discussion focuses on expansion of self-identity, beyond the boundaries of the ego, one is implicitly or explicitly dealing with radical transformation as well. Questions regarding the nature of "normal" functioning and the possibility of an "optimal" physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual health come to the fore. One is now addressing the full range of human nature and our ultimate capabilities and potential."

HOLOTROPIC THEORY

Grof's work differs somewhat from other transpersonal theorists in that he has developed an experiential component providing space for access to holotropic states of consciousness. He combined theory and practice (personal experience). These two aspects, theory satisfying the cognitive mind and practice satisfying the body experientially, are essential elements for the journey towards wholeness. Integrating or letting go of the past provides space for the future. Not only does Grof postulate a transpersonal theory, he offers ways to experience it, thus providing opportunity for body, mind and spirit to connect.

Grof's early work had its foundation in LSD (Lysergic Acid Diethylamide) research. Cataloging the hundreds of LSD experiences facilitated he observed four distinct categories drawn from participants descriptions which led him to postulate his

cartography of consciousness. When LSD usage became illegal, his search for a replacement led to the creation of Holotropic Breathwork which combined ancient spiritual practices with modern consciousness research and depth psychology. This simple process combined a pranayamic type of breath supported by indigenous cultural music and required the experiencer to be an active participant. A particular type of body work was available towards the end of each session which provided opportunities for somatic completion. Inherent, and to be underscored, was the philosophical corollary that healing energy was within each individual, acting as the director of their process. Facilitators were present to support, help to hold the space, and create the container within which the experiencer could maneuver safely.

For the modern human city dweller using ancient methods for accessing holotropic states of consciousness would be out of context without thorough preparation. Ancient methods incorporated sacred intent and were independent of time. Grof's Holotropic Breathwork provides a safe setting, a theoretical foundation, an explication of the process, the experience itself, and integration methodologies.

Hylotropic States of Consciousness

Grof chose the term hylotropic to describe ordinary waking consciousness or that which is oriented towards matter. The word originates from combining the Greek *hyle*, meaning matter, and *trepein*, meaning to move toward. It is in this hylotropic state that we experience the objective reality of the world. Individuals experience themselves as solid and physical with definite boundaries. Time is linear and space is limited to three dimensions. In this reality a person cannot be in two places simultaneously, and two things cannot occupy the same space at the same time.

Holotropic States of Consciousness

Medical professionals will agree that there are differing types of non-ordinary or altered states of consciousness. According to Grof, consciousness changes from a variety of pathological sources; infections, brain traumas and disease, ingestion of poisonous materials, and degenerative disease in general which cannot be included in the term holotropic states of consciousness. Such conditions can initiate deliria or disorientation, impairment or amnesia. Holotropic states of consciousness are rooted in ancient spiritual practices and traditions used throughout the world.

Different cultures and religions use different ways of entering holotropic states of consciousness. Meditation, prayer, the use of sacred plants (psilocybin mushroom or the peyote cactus for example), fasting, sleep deprivation, breathing practices (yogic pranayama has been used for thousands of years), flagellation (pain), temperature extremes (sweat lodges), dancing (Haitian or the Khalahari trance dancing), chanting, drumming, rattling, or spontaneous occurrences (openings during childbirth, or during an intense sexual experience, during physical disease, or powerful stress) for example.

Holotropic consciousness is described by Grof as meaning "moving toward wholeness," and originates from the Greek *holos*, meaning whole, and *trepein*, meaning to move toward. An individual in this setting can experience themselves as a potentially unlimited field of consciousness. Time and space become arbitrary. Many things can occupy the same space at the same time and an experiencer can be in several places at the same time. Events from the past and the future are available to the experiencer simultaneously. Solid form and void can be interchangeable so can

paradox or duality. In this setting an individual can experience the aspects of love and hate, aggression and pacificity, association and dissociation simultaneously either energetically, sensorially, transpersonally or in combination.

Experiencing as a cheetah running to catch its prey, then being caught, killed and skinned, then suddenly becoming a dolphin undulating in tepid waters provides a meaningful experience. These direct experiences of bilocation provide a profound depth of knowledge for the experiencer. The sheer exuberance of the chase. Then the kill and a satisfaction of a full belly. Being restrained, killed, skinned then shifting into a sense of oneness with the movement of undulation provides an energetic emotion of description.

GROF CARTOGRAPHY OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Grof presents a new cartography of consciousness, based upon observations from thousands of LSD experiences and augmented with data from as many Holotropic Breathwork sessions. His ideas of creating a "theory of everything" were eliminated however as it became obvious to him that he was simply re-inventing ancient indigenous wisdom through a modern lens. A powerful reminder that ritual, ceremony and rites of passage are an essential part of our human existence. Sensory, biographical, perinatal and transpersonal components comprise the range of potential experiences accessible in non-ordinary states of consciousness. As Grof documented the LSD experiences he noted that they fell into four distinct categories which he describes as basic peri-natal matrices (BPM) 1, 2, 3, and 4. Additionally, in his observations, Grof noticed threads of connection woven into participant's biographical patterns and named them condensed experiences (COEX). Briefly described, the

cartography is as follows:

1 - Sensory experiences

Exacerbated sensory awareness can be experienced in holotropic states of consciousness. Vibrations can be felt throughout the body or focused in one area. Carpopedal spasms called tetany occur in about half the experiencers. Some physicians believe tetany is a byproduct of hyperventilation. However, even those who experience tetany outgrow it in later sessions. Often times tetany disappears with continued breathing during the session and seems to have more to do with the experiencers resistance, hesitation or withholding, than the deeper, faster breathing technique used. Other exacerbated body tensions seem to disappear with continued breathing as well.

The hearing capacity can be greatly exacerbated, well beyond the normal range; beyond today, even beyond this culture. Participants have spoken in languages which are totally foreign to them. Some of the experiences have been recorded and identified as ancient dialects. This experience may be a corollary to those who "speak in tongues" during religious practice.

Visual experiences can be vivid and described in detail as if in technicolor. Experiencers describe vignettes, rather like slides dropping in a projector, of biographical events or moments from history or views of what may be a future. Often it is as though the experiencer is observing the event, as if they are sitting in a theater watching themselves on the screen. Sometimes the feeling of observation is narrowed and the observer becomes the experiencer, transcending the duality.

The touch can be exacerbated with fingertips and hands becoming more

sensitive. Experiencers often speak of a feeling of electricity emanating through their fingers. Some even speak of an awakening occurring; a desire to become a massage therapist or gardener, for example.

Smells can challenge sensory perception profoundly. Participants often report an accompanying smell to their experience. An ancientness for example can be expressed as a smell of mustiness, or smells of remembered foodstuffs. Taste buds can change significantly as well. Taste and smell are inextricably linked. Often times the felt sense of exacerbated smell and taste are foreign to the experiencers surroundings. It may be several months before they recall the connections. On occasion participants close by an experiencer have smelled odors as well indicating this exacerbated experience can extend beyond the participant into the surrounding territory.

2 - Biographical

Connections can be made in holotropic states of consciousness which are directly linked to biographical material. Often times the experience deals with physical memories. Biographical experiences of omission (things we needed but didn't get while in our growing up years, like nurturing) and commission (things we didn't want but were given, such as abuse) often come to the surface. This is an area of controversy. Therapists offer caution that experiencing in this manner can re-traumatize a patient, perceived to be particularly dangerous for those healing their issues of abuse. However the Grof model excludes literality. In situations of abuse or other trauma, revisiting the event from an adult perspective provides the observer self with another point of view. It is in this distant point of view that healing can and does

occur. As memories of certain events are replayed, situations involving unrequited energies can not only be re-experienced but perceived from a different vantage point often times opening portals for healing by letting go of the old perceptions in favor of new understandings.

3 - Perinatal

Both modern psychiatry and medicine have overlooked the birth process as a place of trauma. Western traditional medicine holds the viewpoint that the cortex of the fetus must be myelinated before memory occurs. Because myelination occurs several months after the fetus is born, memory of the birth trauma and the beginning weeks of life are relegated unimportant, and therefore dismissed. Modern technology however, has shown otherwise. The work of William R. Emerson, reported in the *Journal of Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology and Health* is providing documented evidence that the birthing process indeed holds rich information regarding the meaning of our existence. The entire process of birth can be related either literally or metaphorically to life threatening biographical situations. Potential trauma during pregnancy ranging from physical difficulties emanating from the mother's health or attempted abortions provide ample reasons for the fetus to be powerfully and energetically imprinted. Transpersonal researchers are only just beginning to realize the ramifications related to later biography.

The physical labor forces are strongly suggestive that the birth process constitutes a near-death experience both literally and in metaphor. The umbilical cord can become wrapped around the fetus' neck, and breech-birth or caesarean sections can have their cellular, metaphorical and literal imprinting. As a result water births,

reduced dependency on medications, low lights, music, and education are being adopted in many birthing rooms throughout the western world. Literally we actually end life as a fetus, existing through the umbilical cord, and begin life as a baby, breathing and feeding through the mouth. A severed umbilical cord releases connection with the mother with later re-connection at the breast. Not only can the neonate experience life threat, but so can the mother, with whom the neonate is connected. In delivery the neonate has exchanged its internal condition for an external existence.

Grof describes and identifies four aspects fundamental to the birth process. They are named basic perinatal matrices (BPM) 1, 2, 3, and 4. Their psychopathological relationships are outlined in detail in his books entitled *Beyond the Brain* (1985) and *LSD Psychotherapy* (1980). In brief, they are described as follows:

Basic Perinatal Matrix I - The Amniotic Universe

This matrix includes the time span from the beginning of pregnancy or conception until the onset of labor. This is a blissful time in a normal pregnancy. The fetus is fed, floats in a warm, safe environment, is protected, and receives life-giving sustenance through the umbilical cord. This may be a toxic experience however in an abnormal pregnancy. The mother may be consuming drugs or alcohol, there may be toxemia, attempted abortion or danger of imminent miscarriage.

Basic Perinatal Matrix II - Cosmic Engulfment

When labor begins, at the direction of the fetus if full term, sudden changes in the peaceful, safe, environment of the amniotic universe occur mediating strong chemical and hormonal changes which course through the mother and cross the

placenta. Contractions begin to push the fetus down and out, but there is no exit as the cervix has not yet dilated. Metaphorically the experience of hell, feeling helpless and hopeless becomes exacerbated if the amniotic universe is toxic. Seeds of violence are sewn here.

Basic Perinatal Matrix III - Death/Rebirth Struggle

When the cervix is dilated the fetus begins passage through the vaginal canal.

With movement, solution becomes possible. During this period of dynamic struggle, crushing pressures, suffocation, sexual feelings, aggression and anxieties are experienced. Each uterine contraction restricts the blood supply to the fetus cutting off the supply of oxygen. The umbilical cord may be squeezed between the head and the pelvic opening or twisted around the neck. Charted vital signs during delivery reflect the unfolding physiological trauma and potential life threat (Emerson, 1999).

Basic Perinatal Matrix IV - Death/Rebirth Experience

Completion. The fetus is born. The umbilical cord is cut, and a re-connection occurs with mother, at the breast. A certain amount of relief can be attributed to this successful passage. The trauma of the previous process is over. The infant is now provided its own supply of oxygen, and using its mouth to eat and ingest air can digest food, disposing of its waste products autonomously. The resolution and termination of the death-rebirth struggle has occurred as the fetus transforms into a newborn.

Participants born through caesarean section or are breech birth often speak of differing energetic impressions. Caesarean sections often have difficulty with struggle and compromise, wanting solution immediately and without effort. Breech births

Speak of doing things backwards. Those born with the aid of forceps speak of being pulled in ways against their will. Understanding the metaphorical value, the somatic, energetic and emotional imprinting which may have occurred, potential links to biography begin to become more apparent.

4 - Transpersonal

These experiences transcend the personality form of space and time.

Experiences of another place and time or in another form from the past or in the future can occur. Transcendent, peak or mystical experiences of unity, connection with archetypes and the mythological realms are typical of transpersonal experiences.

Profound learning can erupt from the experience of an elephant for example.

Experiencing an animal so large yet feeling its gentle place of footpad to ground can provide new information for the experiencer regarding a gentleness of touch.

Becoming a dolphin, experiencing the undulation of such largeness in water can provide a unitive experience.

The Condensed Experience (COEX)

Grof suggests that there are links between the birthing process and later biography involving and connecting transpersonal, sensory, and perinatal elements. For example a COEX system during the birthing process may involve the fetus experiencing an umbilical cord wrapped around its neck. In infancy, that individual may experience lack of air from a whooping cough episode; in childhood, a near drowning may have occurred; in adulthood being choked or attacked; and in the transpersonal realm there may be a re-living of an execution by hanging. Each of these dynamics have similar emotional charges although the content and the time

frame differ greatly.

COEX systems can offer new information for self-awareness. The psychology connecting events can be dramatically altered when viewed through the perinatal lens. Socialized elements of shame, blame and guilt can shift from parent-child or child-parent to an imprinted energetic impression which is attached to neither. A consequence unplanned yet dynamically all powerful.

To view the basic perinatal matrices in isolation can provide new information for the psychiatric and counselling professions. More powerful however is the view recorded when all four are connected as an individualist way of life. By way of entering this world, willingly on some level of consciousness, circumstances initiate the beginnings of an unknown journey. As the fetus grows, energetic patterns are recorded somatically and imprinted both emotionally and consciously. Simply viewing the process in metaphor provides ample reason to revise our western system of cause and effect.

In Grof's cartography one BPM connects to another creating a continuum of experience with a multitude of possible cause and effect elements. While modern therapeutic techniques connect the mind with action (behaviorism, psychoanalytic) holotropic learning provides an opportunity for the mind and body to connect and integrate, thereby accessing the healing paradigm of mind-body-spirit. Conceptualizing birth as a near-death experience provides a dramatic social relevance for human kind; that a profound innate understanding of the Source is within each of us.

GAYANEREKOWA, The Constitution of the Iroquois Confederacy

The practical application of theoretical holotropic cartography is realized when viewing the way of the Iroquois after Deganawida appeared. With direct connection to the Creator, fashioned with ceremony, dance, and ritual, many through holotropic learning experiences of sweat lodges (temperature extremes), the sundance (pain), and vision quests (days of solitude on the land, fasting without sleep) these aboriginal peoples lived their essence; their outer actions reflecting their inner nature, in congruence or right-mindedness. Because of their consistent connection with the Source their actions reflected the will of the Creator and through this knowingness the tribe acted in unity, as one.

Deganawida, the Peacemaker came to the warring Mohawk as early as 500BC. He brought peace to the tribe, then went on to join four other tribes; the Oneida, Cayuga, Seneca, and Onondaga. A language, interdependent trading skills, and a method of living was created which lasted almost two thousand years. The 117 Iroquois wampum (articles of law) outline what has been termed the greatest political society, the truest democracy ever devised. Using sacred reverence to the Creator became their foundation. An understanding of the principle of waste not; not the buffalo or corn or the land had evolved. As ceremony and ritual was offered in gratitude to the Creator and the Iroquois Confederacy began using the wampum, a right-mindedness developed.

Many aspects of the Great Law of Peace became incorporated into the Constitution of the United States. The "three strikes, you're out," rule became fashioned into baseball and human resource methodologies. Initially there is a warning

of wrong doing. Should the behavior continue, a more formal warning occurs. If the behavior still continues the employee is terminated, the batter is out or the electricity is turned off.

The basis for our judicial system; be advised of your crime, be faced by your accusers and judged by your peers reflected Iroquois law. During the Iroquois Confederacy all laws were passed with focus on the children's future for seven generations. Their governing process took the form of a circle called a medicine wheel and included both women and men in distinct roles. This way of life, including a division of labor, a recognition of talents, space for all, thrived for almost two thousand years, until the Europeans arrived.

SUMMARY

A contextual history outlining the development of psychology views the transpersonal paradigm proffered as a wholistic concept. Grof's work, combining ancient spiritual practices with modern consciousness research and depth psychology provides a conceptual framework within which holotropic states of consciousness can be explored. Expressing hylotropic and holotropic realities provides territory for modern bilocation to be both witnessed and experienced. Sensory, biographical, perinatal, and transpersonal opportunities provide a profound interconnecting context for self-discovery. Condensed experiential concepts unite the cartography energetically providing a wholistic continuum. The Iroquois Great Law of Peace provides an exemplar of wholistic living.

CHAPTER THREE: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH MODALITY

Experiential explication with self as the experiencer varies between individuals due to definitive accuracy. Descriptive language is formed primarily through cultural, ethnic, social and economic environments. An individual born and raised in New York City will no doubt describe a similar event differently than a person born and raised in Appalachia. A crowd witnessing a simple road accident will often report varying descriptions of the events. Standardized language and corresponding definitions becomes virtually impossible to use when describing unusual or emotionally based events.

My saying, "I saw the face of God," resonates within me as an accurate reflection but it may not to you, the reader, who may believe that God is ineffable. Furthermore, your reactions to my statement may prevent any means to further discussion. Problematic of unusual or unexplained phenomena is the way we describe them to each other. Often times experiencers resort to support groups, attendance formed by those having had similar experiences. Language then becomes less of a distraction and experiencers can delve into the task of integration less encumbered. Language deficits should not, and have only temporarily precluded thorough investigation. Heuristic methodology permits a consistency of language development through immersion, incubation, illumination and resulting explication. Taking time to simply allow the experience to manifest becomes essential when explicating unusual phenomena. Puzzling shapes and colors, metaphor and archetype can begin to develop

into understandable whole perceptual shifts.

HEURISTIC METHODOLOGY

Recently I began a lecture at Duke University's Integrative Medicine

Institute with the following words:

"I am frightened. No, I'm not frightened of public speaking. Fifteen years as Director of Common Cause in Virginia has paved the way for many public appearances, television and radio interviews. No, I am afraid you won't take me seriously. That you'll relegate my experiences to the back burner for a myriad of reasons. And, I need to tell you my experience was profound. It changed my life irrevocably, in many ways, not the least of which is an understanding of my connection with all matter, all living things. . . ."

Heuristic methodology provides a framework for personal immersion, analysis, understanding and explication and heuristic research provides a foundation for the examination of experiences of qualitative phenomenon. Heuristic inquiry provides a cogent, systematized, academically acceptable methodology for and a context of qualitative, subjective matter for researching experiences encountered in holotropic learning.

Clark Moustakas adopted the phrase "Heuristic" whilst searching for a word describing investigations of human experience almost forty years ago. According to Moustakas, Heuristic, from the Greek word *Heiriskein*, meaning to discover, refers to:

"a process of internal search through which one discovers the nature and meaning of experience and develops methods and procedures for further investigation and analysis. The self of the researcher is present throughout the process and, while understanding the phenomenon with increasing depth, the researcher also experiences growing self-awareness and self-knowledge."

Heuristic process allows for the creation of ways of being informed, a way of

knowing, to develop. It is a demanding requiring patience, and lengthy developing trust, process. Entering into a question fully, allowing its true essence to emerge into being thus allowing insights to arise, is time, habit and identity consuming. Making way for a connection between what is external and what is internal is a highly reflective, time variable process. Essentially, in the Heuristic process, a story is created representing the qualities of a unique experience. Bringing to light what is within demands rigorous discipline with great responsibility, an acute awareness of data management. Not to be taken lightly, it is a demanding process, continually questioning and challenging with unwavering diligence.

CONCEPTS and PROCESSES

Beginning with question the researcher seeks answer. A personal source of puzzlement to self-understanding, there is often social and even global significance to be attributed to these initial conditions. These heuristic methods and processes are ways of discovery and self-inquiry invoking one's senses and perceptions at their most basic level of aliveness. A required passionate commitment to waiting until illumination, is at the core of this form of inquiry. Following is a brief description of the components:

Identifying with the Focus of Inquiry

Getting inside the question and allowing the question to become larger and all encompassing, essentially becomes the focus of inquiry. Sitting, often times in a quiet place, contemplatively, allows the experience to blossom, and take on a larger dynamic as its own answer. As the focus of inquiry blossoms, more details previously hidden, can come into view, presenting avenues for exploration, paths of knowing.

Self-Dialogue

Creating the question by allowing said question to have life, noticing its rhythms and patterns thus developing a willingness to enter a process as rooted as the self, occurs in self-dialogue. Heuristically a path of learning unfolds, self-directed, self-motivated yet open to spontaneous shift. External to convention and tradition the path pushes beyond into unknown inner territory. Self-dialogue continues into this unknown territory, conversing back and forth. Critical to this process is honesty and integrity separating desire from necessity relevant to the question.

Tacit Knowing

The Oxford English dictionary defines the word tacit as: "understood, implied, existing, without being stated." Polanyi (1983) believes that all knowledge is rooted in acts of comprehension that are made possible through tacit knowing. The concept that we can know more than we can tell for example. Riding a bicycle, finding our way in the dark, or understanding the mood of a person are additional examples Polanyi cites. Knowing more than we can tell suggests there is a greater capacity for discovery on the inside. Energetically, experiencers who may feel overwhelmed or contained and unable to adequately express their knowingness, must therefore hold an inner tension.

Intuition

Moustakas describes intuition as a kind of bridge that is formed between the implicit knowledge inherent in the tacit and the explicit knowledge which is both observable and describable. The intuitive is the realm of the in between vehicle and is spontaneously available. It is this intuitive capacity which detects patterns, relationships and inferences, connecting to deeper access within.

Indwelling

Understanding something fully requires a dwelling inside the subsidiary and focal factors to acknowledge every possible nuance, texture, circumstance and meaning. Indwelling is both conscious and deliberate. A process which follows clues whenever and wherever they appear, expanding their meanings and associations until a fundamental awareness of understanding has been achieved. Through indwelling the process deepens, widens and extends creating loops requiring reflective analysis, returning again and again to the original question for a more complete perspective.

There is no conclusion in this methodology, only outcomes. An ongoing continuum of time and space provide territory for an immersed indwelling thus allowing unfolding to occur on its own time-frame. In metaphor when the student is ready the teacher will appear and awareness will become apparent.

Focusing

This concept and process has been presented as a therapeutic strategy by Gendlin (1978). Focusing essentially is the creation of a clearing of space, to bring attention to the more central meanings of an experience, thus identifying the core themes that constitute the experience. Achievement of cognitive knowledge including refinements of meaning and perception are obtainable.

The Internal Frame of Reference

Whether the knowledge derived is obtained through intuition, tacit understanding or cognition and whether it is deepened through indwelling or focusing or self-dialogue, the operational foundation is the personal internal frame of reference. To get to the essence of the experience it is the internal frame of reference of the individual involved that must be sought, embellished, broadened, questioned

and followed. External behaviors will sometimes appear incongruent, irrational or distorted without the benefit of the internal frame of reference which must be found within a framework.

PHASES OF RESEARCH

There are six phases of Heuristic research which guide investigations and basic research design. They include the initial engagement, immersion into the question, incubation, illumination, explication and culmination of the research in a creative synthesis. A brief description of each follows:

Initial Engagement

The unveiling of a question, one that holds importance, initially assigned begins the initial engagement. The question lingers until revelation becomes obvious. During this period tacit knowledge, permitting intuition to engage, allows the question to both broaden and deepen until new knowledge is discovered.

Immersion

A thorough immersion takes place when the researcher is focused entirely on the question in waking, sleeping and dreaming time. Everything becomes focused around the question by living it, and growing in its awareness and understanding. Everyday occurrences, people, places, meetings, and spontaneity become playgrounds for cognition.

Incubation

This period allows space for the inner workings of tacit awareness and intuition to add clarity and extend understanding. It is a place of retreat, which allows the inner understanding to reach its fullest potential. A seed planted, requiring nourishment, support and care produces an awareness during a period of incubation.

Illumination

Occurring naturally, illumination refers to the breakthrough into conscious awareness of qualities or clusters of awareness. An awakening into new insights or new thoughts or processes occurs. An understanding, previously unavailable becomes available. Illumination is a modification from previously thought theories and methods. It is seeing in a new way, a slight shift of insight which permits a transition in perception to occur.

Explication

Once illumination has occurred the process of explication remains. Fully examining the awakened essence in order to understand, all the layers of meaning are pursued and described in comprehensive detail. A recognition occurs that thoughts, perceptions, beliefs and judgements can arise from personal experience. An organization of comprehensive depiction encircles the essence of the major components of the experience. In bulbic metaphor, the description of a pony pasture or meadowland in which the question cavorts.

Creative Synthesis

This final phase of Heuristic research requires ordering of the components and core themes into a semblance of affinity and sequence. To quote from Moustakas:

"behavior is governed and experience is determined by the unique perceptions, feelings, intuitions, beliefs and judgements housed in the internal frame of reference of a person. Meanings are inherent in a particular world view, an individual life, and the connections between self, other and world."

Validation, the Measure of Meaning

Heuristic inquiry uses a qualitative methodology to deduce themes relevant to the essence of experience and is not a quantitative measurement that can be

determined by correlations or statistics. The measure becomes one of meaning after rigorous, exhaustive self-examination. Through the components of heuristic inquiry the researcher has systematically collected and analyzed all of the material. The process requires returning again and again to examine the variability of core meanings with rigor and integrity, before full explication.

APPLICATIONS of HEURISTIC RESEARCH

As a process of discovery in Symbolic Growth Experiences (SGEs), heuristic inquiry has contributed considerably. Frick (1990) defined symbolic growth,

"as a conscious perception of the symbolic-metaphorical dimension of immediate experience leading to heightened awareness, the creation of meaning, and personal growth."

Thus the SGE can be defined as an awakening or change in consciousness.

Core conditions essential to therapeutic personality change in person-centered therapy provided a basis for heuristic inquiry. In a broader sense, heuristic psychotherapy utilizes all the components of heuristic inquiry providing an opportunity for both therapist and client to enter states of immersion, intuition and synthesis as methods of facilitating awareness and clarity. Still, it is the therapist who is the keeper of the process.

SUMMARY

The heuristic research model provides a process for evaluating experiences of unusual phenomenon thoroughly, academically and with integrity. Heuristic research provides an archetypal meadowland, a space surrounded by trees, providing safe territory within which to immerse and discover. A process for explication of intuition and tacit knowingness, heuristic research, as a model of investigation, provides a

methodology which allows holotropic experiences from non-ordinary states of consciousness to develop and mature in an orderly, systematic way. Independent of time, heuristic methodology has no ending. The process continues, and as such becomes enjoined with other experiences from each personal journey in a continuing capacity. It is this capacity which encompasses our full human potential and remains autonomous and individualistic. Heuristic methodology underscores the concept that there is more within, contained as knowingness, than can be outwardly expressed.

CHAPTER FOUR: DESIGN COMPONENTS

Exposure to holotropic states of consciousness from a near-death in 1972, and many Holotropic Breathwork sessions from 1987 to the present time readied me to pursue this next calling to the land. Whether this calling was mystical or metaphorical it was both real and profound. A vibrational resonance from deep within had me seeking a particular type of setting. Backpacking or Outward Bound did not seem to measure up and I was eventually guided to a contemporary rite of passage which included ways to enter holotropic states of consciousness. With self as the experiencer and heuristic methodology providing an in-depth examination, a unique triple-tier learning process was developed. Following is an outline of the elements embraced within a contemporary rite of passage including the triple-tier learning process.

A Contemporary Rite of Passage

The elements of fasting, sleep deprivation and solitude in a natural setting combine to form the basis for this contemporary rite of passage accessing holotropic states of consciousness. An expanded time-frame included several months for preparation, a ten-day wilderness experience, followed by an integration process stretched the entire process to eighteen months.

The inner process of holotropic learning begins with the decision to make the journey. Those who seek this type of experience look toward a life vision as well as a ritualizing of life's transitions in a meaningful way. Generally it is in response to a calling from within each person to leave their daily life and seek re-connection with or guidance from their inner Source. It offers the experiencer an opportunity to leave

their current setting and enter into a relationship with Source anew.

Experiencers seek clarity for a variety of reasons. Transitions from personal loss, change of job, illness, mid-life and menopause, addictions, or other significant life questions are often uppermost in the experiencers mind. Some feel called to experience in order to renew themselves spiritually or to celebrate their lives in a meaningful way. Others feel they have reached a plateau and seek guidance for the next phase. Some are simply attracted, unaware of the specific reasons. In holotropic states of consciousness each person is empowered in their own way, from their own experiences under the direction of their own inner guide.

There are four phases to this particular type of contemporary rite of passage. They are entitled: Preparation, Leaving it behind, Sacred world, and the Return. A brief description of each phase follows:

1 - Preparation

This stage takes place individually through instructions sent by the guide(s), and through preparatory meetings prior to time spent in the wilderness. Preparation usually is a six-month process. During this time, materials need to be read and equipment researched, purchased or borrowed. The physical preparation begins with spending a day on the land without food, just water, from sun-up to sun-down. Paying attention to the act of leaving, noticing what may be ending, and allowing space to be created for newness to arise. Exercises may include writing a last will and testament, or listing personal possessions for disbursement, or reconciling with estranged ones.

2 - Leaving it Behind

This stage begins as final preparations are made to leave home, family,

friends, job and accustomed sense of self, and will last through the first few days of the wilderness journey. Engagement in a series of ritual enactments is designed to help prepare experiencers leave a known world behind them and clarify their intentions for the journey. Experiencers are asked to let go of any ideas whatsoever of who they think they are, or what form they may take; what can and cannot be accomplished; what is possible or impossible; or what is right or wrong with their surroundings.

As a lengthy walk is planned with backpacks containing tents, tarpaulins, mats, sleeping bags, clothes, rain gear, food and other stuff, items to be carried must be arranged by way of importance. Weight, size and need must be evaluated. Everything must fit into the backpack to be carried.

3 - Sacred World

After securing a base camp location participants explore their surroundings seeking an appealing geographic location where solitude will occur. Experiencers step through a created ceremonial circle to spend four days and nights alone in their chosen place. Experiencers fast during this time, consuming only water and generally do not sleep on the last of the four nights. Each person will be alone before the reflections of nature, surrounded by a natural wilderness. Exploration of sacred, symbolic and mythic dimensions of individual lives as well as the mysteries and gifts of mother earth may be examined during this personal immersion time.

4 - Return

The return begins with the experiencers rejoining the group at base camp for breakfast. During the next three days experiencers will share their stories clarifying

the gifts that each feel they have received from their journey. Not until the return home for reunion with family and friends does the final and most challenging phase of the journey begin. The integration process which allows for a full year of immersion is supported by loved ones, family, friends and other experiencers. This is an important impactful time as realizations and gained awareness play themselves out through relationship with career, loved ones and community.

TRIPLE-TIER LEARNING

A powerful pedagogy provided by direct personal experience anchors cognitive thinking and experiential impressions in the rubric of holotropic learning. A personal learning with self as subject, self as analyst and self as explicator. Approaching holotropic learning using different accessing strategies; a near-death, Holotropic Breathwork sessions and a contemporary rite of passage in the form of a wilderness journey, were examined in-depth using heuristic methodology. These three research methods, near-death, Holotropic Breathwork, and wilderness journey are subject-focused and developed as learning paths. Combined with an in-depth heuristic examination they form a unique triple-tier pedagogical process.

This set and setting provides opportunity for holotropic learning to be experienced from three differing viewpoints. With self as the research tool holotropic states of consciousness were experienced, described and analyzed using a consistent source.

SUMMARY

This particular contemporary rite of passage design includes four distinct segments; Preparation, Leaving it behind, Sacred world and the Return. Eighteen

months are allocated for completion, divided three ways; preparation, experience and integration. Following the preparation period of several months, the experience of ten days on the land, including four days of fasting, the last of which includes sleep deprivation concludes with an integration process of approximately a year for process embodiment.

The powerful triple-tier learning pedagogy brings focus to accessing holotropic states of consciousness from differing viewpoints, using an in-depth heuristic methodology with self as the subject.

PART B: The Language of Holotropic Light: Unpacking the Experience

Introduction

Theme One: Near-death

Theme Two: Holotropic Breathwork

Theme Three: A Call to the Land

Theme Four: Packing

Theme Five: Getting Ready to Not Return

Theme Six: Death of a Different Kind

Theme Seven: Ten Days of Absence

Theme Eight: Highway Driving on Poached Eggs

Theme Nine: Sense and Sensibilities

Theme Ten: The Space Between

Conclusions

Summary

Introduction

My dyslexia proved difficult in my early years. Testing poorly, except in the area of spatial dexterity would have placed me in special education classes, but fifty years ago, in British public schools the situation wasn't addressed, and I grew up simply knowing I was different. Slow, they said. In high school, spatial relationship skills provided a foundation for engineering studies. Seeing differently became a gift.

Just recently a ten-year study of dyslexia has revealed remarkable differences in patterns of data processing. Brain scans reveal that dyslexics make five additional steps in their processing than non-dyslexics. This news resonated within my soul. Dyslexics often take more time and use a spatial quality of observational capacity. We naturally see much more than we can express. Profound, I thought.

Each of us, I believe has our own cross to bear, our own journey to discover, and in that light we are all christ-like. How we bear that cross and come to our own personal healing seems, on some level of consciousness, a provided opportunity to use our personal trials and tribulations as gifts to others. Individuals can therefore only heal themselves and support others in their ways of healing, honoring their own inner director. Society can only provide the meadowland. The individual must be willing to discover. Discovery of the darkness as well as of the lightness.

The following pages essentially focus on the events of my contemporary rite of passage. The beginning themes describe my inner packing. Events and circumstances which brought me to this place of desired re-connection with my mother, the earth.

The center themes describe the rite of passage and the ending themes describe developing concepts, perceptions and discoveries offering continued new ways of learning. An eighteen month experience analyzed using heuristic methodology connecting some of the many impressions and shifts in consciousness which occurred. Describing the fullness of holotropic learning requiring a dimensional concept difficult to explicate. Within the sphere lurks mathematical equations, molecular structures and linear roadways combining in a dance of light, energetically enigmatic yet intuitively known. I trust you'll get the picture!

Theme One: Near-death

A twenty-six year old researcher in polymer chemistry, employed by a blue chip chemical company in the rolling hills of New Jersey was I. One morning, an event took place which I can only refer to as an experience of death. 1972 seems such a long time ago and yet it seems like yesterday. Years before Ray Moody wrote of such experiences, the events of that day have been etched in my entire being, never to be forgotten. On the one hand the literal recounting of the events of that day are easy; areas of clear recall, but on the other hand inexplicable intuitions and revelations, unclear and somewhat fuzzy became apparent.

Let me begin then with the easiest explication - the events of that day. It was not an unusual day, rather routine in fact. I had been testing a number of polymer samples for flame retardancy for several weeks. The routine was standard practice. Polymer bars left in a desiccator for a period of time, making certain that they were dry. Priming the equipment, readying for the day's testing, it was a little past nine in the morning.

The desiccator was a glass jar, with a quarter inch thick glass sliding lid, standard laboratory equipment used for keeping samples dry. As I took the lid off, it shattered, a piece of glass tearing through my flesh at the right wrist, through to the bone. Blood spurted like a geyser. Contrary to years of safety training I turned to my right, toward the door, rather than to the left, toward the telephone. Five paces and I was in the hallway. The nearby elevator door was opening as I held up my blood

drenched arm and said, "I need help." Time passed. I was on the floor. Must have lost consciousness. There were people around me calling my name. I tried to speak but no words came forth. Someone was tying something around the upper part of my right arm. More time passed. A man's voice calling my name sounded far off. An oxygen mask was placed over my face. I was picked up and placed on a gurney. More time passed. I was in an ambulance and felt as if I were floating. The siren sounded muffled, far away. There were people with me, I could hear them. Time passed again. Someone was asking me to sign a form, putting a clipboard in front of my eyes which could not focus. I was moved from the gurney to the operating table and looked up into this intense light just above me.

What happened next was described to my surgeon the following day, who responded to the story by saying it was not unusual for people to repeat such details when suffering from similar traumatic accidents. After that recounting I did not talk about the experience again for more than twenty years until a colleague, who was a pastoral counselor at the Medical College of Virginia, asked if I would participate in the making of a medical training video.

So I was moved from the gurney to the operating table and looked up into this intense light just above me. Suddenly, I was on the ceiling looking down at myself on the operating table. Voices were clear as nurses hustled about calling for blood matching and a fibrillation unit. My vision had clarity. I watched nurses, doctors enter and leave the room, working around me cutting clothing from my body. I watched tubes being inserted into my arms, equipment being wheeled in. Then, with

equal suddenness, as if the next slide dropped in the projector, I was in the universe, aware of the darkness of the sky, noticing the planets and the stars while moving toward this intense golden white light tinged at the edges with blue. As this light and I came closer together I could begin to see details, as if a mist were surrounding me. Trees and mountains and streams were coming into view. Animals too! Blurred and unclear I couldn't quite make out the details. Then, I began to slowly turn to the left, away from the light, past the darkness of the sky, and as earth came into view I could see this silver translucent cord connecting from me and drifting down toward the earth. And as I saw all of this, the experience ended.

From the time of the accident, two hours had passed getting to the hospital and preparing for surgery, while several more hours were spent re-attaching the tendon, and ulnar nerve. The ulnar artery had been tied off at my wrist. My heart had stopped and started spontaneously for just a few moments during this process.

Having contained description of this experience within for some twenty years has less to do with an unwillingness to discuss the details and much more to do with lacking appropriate verbiage to describe the incredible feelings that grew to magnificence during this time. Even now, after several explications I find myself providing a caveat; words fail me miserably. Words fail me constantly. Oftentimes I find myself using analogies to food when describing the experience's impact. If you could imagine a huge vat of chocolate and you were a strawberry swimming. Or, imagine the most divine experience of your lifetime and multiply it a thousand fold. This experience for me was deeper than the deepest deep, higher than the highest

high, rounder than the roundest round.

Spatially it was fully dimensional. In particular, it had a quality of depth, as if, had I continued towards the center of the light would have literally continued, entering a huge space without boundaries. I was aware that I was missing nothing and being present with everything yet at the same time I was aware of movement. My movement or the light's movement? Without a framework of reference unable to be certain of what was moving where, a plethora of questions flooded my mind. Exacerbated sensory experiences heightened, intuitive and psychic insights were occurring. Most importantly though, I experienced a peace and a calm. A tranquility which seemed to resonate deep within. A centered calm, new to me and yet, at the same time, familiar.

Nothing in all of my education, family framework or religious training prepared me for this experience. It defied time and it defied space. And, it defied description. Had the attending physician not acknowledged my experience I would have thought I had simply "lost touch with reality." In which case talking about it would have been my last consideration. I would have wanted to forget it as soon as possible, bury it deeply in the back of my mind for fear others may think ill of me.

I would imagine that on some level of consciousness my body knew it was in trauma. The sudden loss of blood, low pressure shock, would surely put the body into emergency status and the increase of glutamate and ketamine excretions as the body believed it was about to end its life makes perfect sense to me. Even though I have a weight of scientific curiosity about me innately, it is this place of peace and

tranquility which intrigues me the most. It matters less that I have a plausible explanation of where I went or what I experienced. What matters more is the acknowledgment that this experience changed my life irrevocably. It was the most profound experience I have ever encountered, connecting me with a place within myself that I never knew existed before, experiencing an awakening of huge proportion; a realization of my place in the universe; an understanding that the universe is friendly; and an understanding that the universe has an intelligence was simply awesome. As if I am a grain of sand on the beach. An important grain of sand, but nevertheless a grain of sand. And although scientific analyses and consequent theory argue over the effects and reproducibility of system shutdown on the body, it is the very experience itself that has value for me.

I was unable to provide a focal point against which to measure time or distance. Size was another unclear element. I was unable to describe the "I" who was having the experience. Was "I" on the ceiling or on the operating table? The silver cord for example that flowed between me and the earth attached to me I know not where, and yet, it was clear that it did attach to me. I was not aware of my physical body during this experience of being on the ceiling, as if the physical form had completely disappeared.

But it was the intense feeling of the light, as if I had become the light which moved me so. I knew the light. It was familiar, ecstatic and unconditional. Whether this feeling was true or the equivalent of a placebo, it was simply beyond description, and filled my soul. At that moment I felt complete and whole, wanting for nothing,

and being provided with everything.

The literal process of events previously outlined are simply explicated. Recognition of this connection to the fully dimensional experience within the light having a reflective aspect within me was quite revolutionary however. Accessing a space of peace and tranquility within permitted me an experience of connection to a place of seemingly universal proportion. Awesome. It was as if I had touched hallowed, sacred ground.

In Richmond the press call me the "ethics lady" or "mighty mouth," being a lone voice for ethical and accountable government lobbying on behalf of a non-profit citizens group. Ethics, the science of the boundary between right and wrong was my passion. On some level of consciousness my "fight" for campaign finance reforms left me frustrated with politicians incongruence of saying one thing, doing another, while thinking a third. This place of boundary intrigues me. The edge between inner and outer, the place where form changes, or does it?

Because of the tremendous impact this near-death trauma brought me, an awareness emerged from within that life does not end with physical death. In addition, any fear of death I had simply melted away. Experiencing this universal omnipotence, this light provided me with a knowingness of the eventual future. There has also been a clear loss of the fear of death which manifests on a much smaller everyday scale. My truth-telling for example has become more fluid and immediate to the presenting opportunity. Requiring less process time to access the truth I seem to have a way to get there directly. This authenticity doesn't suddenly appear. It has its

own life. A journey I continue to grow in it seems. My authenticity getting more congruent in body-mind interconnections with each day. The more willing I am to truth-tell, the more I dwell in the light. The more I dwell in the light the more congruence of inner and outer I experience. Inner tensions seemingly disappearing.

Accessing ways to re-experience the light or near-death seemed possible and desirable. If we could access this direct experience, I thought reliance on words for communication would diminish, and intuitive resources would increase. Maybe we have simply been provided all that we need by this universal wisdom. Seeking other ways, natural ways, to enter holotropic states of consciousness should be available. Clearly there is power in direct experience. It is as if holotropic states of consciousness act as a mediator which permits an interchange of mixing and merging, of coming together and drifting apart.

Krishnamurti (1988) spoke eloquently about truth-telling and the fear surrounding expressing it. Initially, truth-telling separates the person speaking from the person(s) listening. Separation is time dependent upon how quickly each individual processes to completion however before transcendence or understanding occurs. Agreement or disagreement comes until new mutual territory is discovered. And so the dance begins. The more we tell the truth, the more honesty is expressed, the less we fear. The more our body and mind is congruent in actions and thought the less separation experienced from our true essence, our light, the Source.

As I continue with my days, being present to the moments, willing to tell my truth, allowing the separation to occur, knowing universal wisdom is there constantly

supporting me as a river of energy, then each time I reveal my truth that fragmented part has an opportunity to heal, to integrate, to come into my being. My energy increases, so does my passion and I am able to step forward toward my true place in this world.

Acknowledging that all matter external to myself is the property of the universe provides me with a new found sense of reverence. Rarely do I use indiscriminately or use to excess. Rarely do I kill living things anymore. Spiders get taken from my house and deposited in the garden. If I do kill a wasp or poisonous thing I apologize for the action. Even my reverence towards non-living things has changed dramatically. I find myself recycling, picking up litter, using white paper products, using less plastic. Personal needs seem less, as if I'm moving more towards a life of service. I relate differently with animals, smile more toward strangers, have less desire to have my way and have much more desire to enjoy this adventure called life.

Yes, I do feel as though I am a grain of sand on the beach. An important grain of sand in that if I move, all the other grains of sand move also, but nevertheless I am a grain of sand. Separated, autonomous, yet connected and inter-connected, simultaneously.

Theme Two: Holotropic Breathwork

My first Holotropic Breathwork experience occurred in 1989. Intuition had previously dictated I could re-connect with the space experienced during my near-death and I had searched long and hard for the opportunity. To discover such a simple mechanism for re-connection, a combination of breathing and music, seemed too easy. Although the content of my initial experience was quite different, the texture, ambiance, intuitive knowingness understood on a deep and profound level was remarkably similar. A three-year Transpersonal Training and Certification with Stanislav Grof, M.D. provided a combined foundation of theory and practice from which I began developing my own public workshops, individual sessions, and lectures.

The joy resulting from my initial experience with Holotropic Breathwork came as a result of being catapulted back into a place similar to the one experienced during my near-death. I had been seeking this place for almost twenty years, knowing on some level of consciousness that access was possible. In particular, knowing that access was possible without the finality of death.

There are literally hundreds of examples of insights and awareness brought to light for me during these sessions, some seemingly enormous, others quite minute. Erupting at the strangest of times, illogically, non-linearly as if this holotropic realm has a mind of its own. Relating an insight to a particular holotropic session is simply impossible however. It is as if doorways have been opened, and once opened seem to

provide insights in their own pattern, on their time-frame. Connecting through several sessions, experiencing a release, then a shift into a new arena, as if a form was emerging.

There are two levels of insight that have arisen. The first pertaining to my body, with tangible examples of physical changes. Having been diagnosed with Raynaud's disease in 1972 a relief came to my shoulders. Painful experiences involving both hands and feet had been part of my life for as long as I can remember. Coming at unspecified times, several times monthly, a cramping followed by pain, eventually drifting towards the elbow was satisfied only with time. Heat or blankets seemed ineffective. My Grandmother had it too. In the family, we thought. Remarkably, I have not had a Raynaud's attack since beginning Holotropic Breathwork experiences in 1989.

As a consistent blood donor, recordings of respiration, blood pressure, pulse are kept on hand at the blood bank. After the first year of the Grof training, reductions were noticeable in both pulse rate and blood pressure and headaches had essentially disappeared.

The second level of insight is much more difficult to identify and explicate. It is quite illusive and I find myself constantly being open to change forcing me to simply acknowledge what is present in this moment. My experiences seem to have a geometric pattern to them, almost a natural flow. Although each Holotropic Breathwork session is different and unique in content, they seemed to relate for a while before moving on, reminding me of a fabric weaving. As if a push or pull is

occurring, followed by a few more pushes and or pulls, rather like a pulsation, intensifying with each session before an emergence occurs followed by a settling, a relaxation. Exemplified in my most recent session by the aggression and violence felt whilst chasing, catching, killing and eating a fellow animal. Then being killed. Then experiencing the soothing undulation of a dolphin swimming in warm, gentle, water. Rumbblings, moving toward an eruption, an energetic interlude eventually ceasing but not returning to the point of initiation. Like an ocean wave crashing on the shore then receding, energy depleted eroding some granules of sand gently. Is this the energy of the universe I wonder? Always shifting, moving? Never quite returning to its origination point? Undulating? Pulsing? Spiraling?

A series of Holotropic Breathwork sessions originally experienced in February 1992 seemed to be profound. For four consecutive sessions I experienced extreme heat emanating from the center of my being. During the last of the sessions, towards the very end, I became aware of an intense headache. Severe pain travelling up the spine, originating from the same place as the heat. As pain throbbed, a vivid visual appeared. I saw myself as young, wearing a short hair cut, dressed in a short burlap dress, wrists tied behind my back, ankles bound. In front of me was a block of wood. I knelt. My headache ceased as decapitation occurred. My body twitched for hours, through the night and into the next day. Trying to relate its meaning was frustrating. What is ending? My job? A relationship? What is severing? Nothing seemed to change in reality until I had a telephone call in the summer 1995, some three years later, by a student collecting research on Raynaud's disease. I remembered describing

this particular series of holotropic experiences including the decapitation. The researcher asked when was it that I associated the binding of the hands, feet, and decapitation with the cessation of Raynaud's attacks. "Not until you just suggested it," I remarked. My understanding is that Raynaud's is a hereditary disease of the autonomic nervous system whereby the system shuts down at the wrists and ankles. Whether this sense of healing is literal or not is immaterial. It seemed to be right, making sense on an intuitive level. What is more important though is the attacks ceased.

Subtle data transfer underscores the difficulty of relating hylotropic (ordinary) and holotropic (non-ordinary) states of consciousness. An immediate cognitive intensity appears as analysis is desired, yet often times there is simply no interpretation beyond the experience to be made. Words fail me, even though an implicit transference of knowledge has occurred. A knowingness has developed. Form has changed. And I can't quite explain it.

An experience in August 1992, after which I drew a mandala spontaneously of a rooster laying an egg seemed intense. It wasn't until later in the evening that the content struck me. How can a rooster lay an egg? Was this an experiential metaphor? Someone else in the group had an experience of being both male and female at the same time as if a reconciliation were occurring for him. He looked at my mandala and began telling of his experience. My mandala was drawn without conscious thought and within a few moments. It was only afterwards that I began to notice what had been drawn. I became the rooster. And although the idea of inner male and

female archetypical integration seemed intriguing, there was more. The experience of eating corn mixed with ashes from a funeral pyre above was most real. It seemed significant although the act in and of itself appeared relatively unimportant. There are native aboriginal rituals which involve eating the ashes of burned departed Chieftains, an understanding that the power and wisdom is passed on. Whether that was what I was doing or not remains to be seen. I can only acknowledge that an understanding of native aboriginal wisdom is erupting in my body. It is as if I know things.

In 1998 I attended a pow-wow at which the Aztec fire-dancers were performing. Not only did I know their chants, but I also knew their music. I sang and danced along with them, beginning and ending as if on cue. Synchronicities abounded. I walked around the pow-wow and found a dream catcher which appealed to me. Not for sale. Wait! A woman came forward and took my hand, chanted, looked into my eyes and gave it to me. "It is yours," she said before disappearing into the background again. Later I discovered the dreamcatcher was Aztec, made with rooster tail feathers. I'm still not certain what to make of this experience. It bears mentioning here that I lost my taste for chicken meat for several months after this particular holotropic session.

A session in July 1991 seemed particularly important. My mother died from Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (Lou Gehrig's Disease) in 1970. A horrible, slow death from wasting muscles. I had felt much guilt for leaving her in England with my abusive father when I emigrated to this country. I had always remembered an air of fear around me, recognizing that it did not seem to be mine but rather was simply

around me, close to me, like saran wrap. This particular session was not so different to others I had experienced. Experiences to date had involved sensory exacerbations and transpersonal experiences. Experiencing traveling through the birth canal repeated the sensation of being on the ceiling looking down at myself on the operating table. I knew I was on the floor in a training setting and yet, felt this reality of being trapped, confined by this fleshy, solid wall which wasn't me. Feeling suffocated, seeing and moving toward the light at the end of the tunnel I emerged, sat up, saw the entire delivery room in detail and realized it was not my fear but my mothers. Of course! War time England. Dad was at war. Mom was twenty years old. Thousand bomber raids were frequent and devastating. The family business was destroyed. The ability to put myself in my mother's place empathically, provided an almost instant change in my perception. It seemed as if my body began a process of release at that moment. Several months later, whilst sitting at my office desk, a remembrance of the experience came over me. My body lightened as if a little black cloud lifted off my shoulders and drifted out the window, upwards toward the sky. A tension seemingly disappearing.

A Mandala drawn in April 1994 was particularly powerful at the time, primarily because of its vividness. Over the years I have had several connections with buffalo during Holotropic Breathwork sessions. It is as if I knew this animal intimately and fully. Each time I have experienced a discomfort in my left leg, a piercing pain surfaces. This session was experienced in Killarney, Ireland at a workshop of some 300 participants attending the International Transpersonal

Association's Conference. As the session began I immediately became a buffalo. This is a different experience than that of observing myself being a buffalo. I was not the observer in this instance. I became the buffalo. Roaming the land with other buffalo I was suddenly felled by a shot to my leg. Piercing, I fell to my knees, then fell to my side. As I lay there searching for breath I was skinned. Feeling every slice across my body, chest and back vividly. As the skin was removed it was stretched and I shifted into becoming the skin. I was stretched over some wood. Then pounding began. Pounding. The vibrations were intense. The pounding was on my head and I could feel every nuance of each beat throughout my entire body. A rhythm was being drummed on my head. As the experience ended a desire surfaced to immerse my body in water. Returning home that evening I readied for a bath. I glanced toward the mirror as I was about to enter the tub and stopped. My chest and back were bright pink in color. I burst into tears. Sinking into the warm water, tearing salty tears I remembered the story my mother told of my dislocated shoulder. Happening when I was very young, wartime medics taped my arm to my body. A month later, when the sticky tape was to be removed, along with a layer of my skin, screams could be heard throughout the facility. Mother said my torso was bright pink for several days. And so it was this particular day, my upper torso feeling raw.

Theme Three: A Call to the Land

I began thinking about spending time in nature several years ago, often taking my companion dog with me for day trips to various parks. Backpacking or Outward Bound simply weren't appealing. My experience seemed less to be about conquering various aspects of nature and much more about discovering my relationship, or lack thereof, with the natural elements themselves. More to do with a re-connection, as if I had distanced or been distanced, from my center. This "call" was felt in my center core, and seemed to be deep and ancient, almost not of me, but through me.

Three years ago I began serious inquiry into ways to experience the land holotropically. A contemporary rite of passage, incorporating fasting and sleep deprivation with solitude in nature provided a contained experience, and seemed appropriate. Scheduled for June 1998 with preparation begun in January and integration concluding a year later. Here I am then, feeling a yearning for my roots, ready to experience my archetypal mother in full force, full of trepidations, not knowing quite what to expect, yet imbued with a child-like excitement.

Theme Four: Packing

There are different types of packing, dependent upon where I'm traveling. There's packing for a day trip or a suitcase for a vacation. Depending upon where I'm going different things will be packed for use later on; snacks, clothing, toiletries too. But in this case, packing refers to what has been stuffed into my skin, for my skin is my suitcase, my bag.

Who am I? What am I? Where am I? These standard perennial questions loom large as I reflect upon packing for ten days in the wilderness. This skin which I can feel and touch at the end of my fingertips becomes the boundary of my inner to outer self. Outside, I and others can see and hear animals, objects, the planets and other things. But what's on the inside where its dark and wet? Blood and guts, bones and tissue, memories and nerves. The inner workings. Am I then a compilation of things, a bag of skin, full of stuff? Skin, tissue, systems of blood delivery and nerves, bones, and marrow? Inside, the entrails are processing food, and digesting liquids. A skin covered wormhole with entrance and exit, and internal processing. It is all processing, isn't it? And then there is this other stuff, difficult to identify. I have sensory abilities; touch, sight, hearing, taste and smell. I'm able to speak and language communication. I have biographical memories from experiences. I can remember my birth on a cellular level. Feeling contained, ready to explode. I can feel the push and the pull, the struggle I experienced to get here. I can experience stuff coming in and stuff going out. I am my mom and my dad and their moms and dads going back to ancient

times, remembering all the history deep inside our DNA. Of course I can remember it all on some level of consciousness. This is not such a novel concept. This transpersonal cartography, simply beyond me, but through me, and of me, reminding me of the following lyrics from my favorite movie, "The Lion King:"

"From the day we arrive on the planet
and blinking step into the sun,
there's more to see than can ever be seen,
more to do than can ever be done.
There's far too much to take in here,
more to find than can ever be found,
but the sun rolling high through the sapphire sky
keeps great and small on the endless round.
It's the circle of life.
And it moves us all,
through despair and hope,
through faith and love,
till we find our place on the path unwinding
in the circle, the circle of life."

- Tim Rice

Born during wartime England, breech-birth, an only child, diagnosed with dyslexia I could see colors around people when I was younger. Thought everybody did. I knew when they were happy or sad. I could hear the earth move with rumblings and could tell my dad's car coming from a mile away. I loved the fresh air, being outdoors and playing with the horses. Remembering the frightening experience of kissing my dead grandmother at her funeral. Spending less time outdoors, feeling the colors slipping away. Passing exams for high school and being asked what I wanted to be when I grew up. Answering, "an aircraft designer," and getting laughed at. Nightmares for weeks.

Arguing vehemently with my college math professor who wanted to discard

part of a theory because it wasn't applicable in this setting. Eliminate the negative simply because it is below the horizon and therefore "not real." Why? Wanting to escape my father's wrath. He would say he was simply a strong disciplinarian, I would say he was abusive. Waiting for emigration. Watching my mother's sadness at dockside as the Cunard liner which carried my father to war left for the United States taking me to freedom. Stuffing for the sack.

Stuffed into a suitcase of skin, these bones were separated from the natural elements by layers of skin and fatty tissue. The brain, myelinated at about nine months of biological age, housing memories. A somatic wonderland of emotions, reactions imprinted through the wormhole of birth. Seeing the light of God, a near-death, as life is squeezed and born into biography. A suitcase stuffed with tiny particles, molecules, and atoms bringing ancient history forward. Centuries of consciousness contained within.

Am I then a product of history; cellular consciousness and molecular hereditary factors, perinatal cartography, and biography? Coming here, arriving with my set of circumstances, my unique self through a tunnel of spiritual light. No surprise. The birth experience is traumatic. Traumatic enough to promote a near-death. Seeing the light at the end of the tunnel may just provide each of us with a knowledge and intuition, an understanding of that place we came from, the Source. Experiences that seem important to me are important to my powers of cognition, not necessarily to my intuitive wisdom. Suddenly cognitive reality takes a back seat. Ways of connecting to spirit become far more important, far more real.

An only child, diagnosed dyslexic, left handed with a protracted breech birth in wartime England, it seems my younger years were important. A happy child, adventuresome, positive. Feeling a suffocation, release came with emigration. I was not supposed to question and I had lots of questions. Feeling all my emotions being drawn within, contained, was unpleasant. More stuffing for the sack.

Even working in research, a place where search for the basic truth was suggested became a focus of profit making for corporate stockholders. Products being created simply for profit. Wondering what the repercussions were for substances not tested. Wondering why we were tinkering in such a manner. Taking raw material, adapting, adding, subtracting to make new things, necessitating marketing campaigns to sell the public, creating the belief that the product was needed. All for stockholders profit. Something was wrong, terribly wrong with this way of life. Einstein said that all we needed to do to understand the universe was to simply sit and observe. Why are we not content to simply sit? Why do we need to tinker so?

I've always wondered what makes people do things in opposition to all their training. We had a system for emergencies in the laboratory. It was taught and drilled into us often. On the day of my accident I chose to ignore all teaching. I'd be dead if I hadn't. I wondered where that knowledge came from. Some internal intuition overpowering, interrupting my system, almost a safety default. A demonstration of tacit knowing perhaps.

This industrial accident was however a turning point. An experience of near-death which shattered my understanding of things and replaced it with a deep

awareness that I was connected with all matter in the universe. Beyond even a sentient connection. I had never felt such a feeling of belonging before. This feeling was far beyond an understanding acquired from simple experience. This feeling resonated within every part of my being. It was as if I had suddenly come alive. As if someone had abruptly turned the faucet on. Understanding immediately the notion of duality and paradox. Fear of death eliminated. A power within growing. An understanding of community so great it was beyond people. I could commune with a beetle, or a tree? A softness of teardrops is coming as I write this. A recent product, each time I speak of sacredness, my whole being responds, in humility.

Several years ago I was traveling to Lynchburg from Richmond via Appomattox along a particularly winding wooded area, after facilitating a Holotropic Breathwork weekend. Opting to drive home immediately at the conclusion of the workshop found me traveling along this winding, wooded area late at night. The light from the moon cast a surreal effect over the road. In the headlights I saw a tree walking out into the road in front of me using its roots like legs. There were animals running around it. And out of nowhere appeared a lion looking directly into my headlights, reflecting its eyes. Thinking I must be losing my sense of reality I focused on my imminent death. I rubbed my eyes, drank some iced water and looked ahead again only to find another larger tree walking across the road with more animals hanging at its root system. Feeling somewhat ungrounded I slowed my speed and straddled the center yellow line until reaching the outskirts of Richmond where I quickly ordered a roast beef sandwich and felt my feet being placed square to the

ground.

Telling no one of the experiences, several months later I returned to Lynchburg for another workshop. Traveling toward the city I rounded a bend in the road and immediately burst into tears pulling the car over to the side. Those trees which had walked across the road in front of me, seemingly speaking to me some months earlier, were uprooted and lying on their sides. Dead. The result of an intense winter storm. Immediately I knew. Their death had been imminent. Getting out of the car I sat with them grieving their loss. As I walked around the uprooted trees tiny new growths could be seen sprouting from the ground. New bright green shoots readying to grow into large beautiful trees. It felt as if I had connected with these trees on some deep and personal level of consciousness. Clearly in hylotropic reality I am unable to communicate with them, but this experience was resonating within me on some intense vibrational level. Were they communicating their imminent death and if so, why, or was it simply a call to the night wind, an understanding of approaching calamity?

Facilitating Holotropic Breathwork sessions over the past ten years has provided space for me to observe my developing skills, talents, and abilities. My hands in particular seem to have awakened. Strange to imagine considering my years of Raynaud's disease. My fingers now are warm and toasty. I can feel things differently even as I touch my own skin. Vibrations, energy, sensing I don't know what to call it. But I don't believe I'm unique. I believe each of us can access similarly from within. This direct connection with spiritual experience is our

birthright, is it not? I've witnessed events in the Holotropic Breathwork settings which are outside the framework of hylotropic rationale. Lines of redness appearing on the foreheads of participants, later to discover they were born with a forcep delivery. A man experiencing labor contractions as if giving birth, experiencing himself as a woman. A particular aroma present around an experiencer later to discover they were delivered using gas. Humans taking on the actions of animals; bear, lion, snake, reporting an added awareness, an interconnection with the animal kingdom. Hundreds of experiences defying scientific rationale.

Packing for this journey was simple. I bring me to be as present as I can be, to simply show up, pay attention, and not be attached to the outcomes. To leave my world reconciled, in order, having contributed more than I took, I set off to die, to let go of this model of me in its entirety and open to a tabula rasa, a newness, to another beginning. Packing for me was the inside of my sack. Equipment, food and clothing fitting into my back pack simply stuff to take for the journey.

This pull towards the land seems incongruent for me. After all, camping for me is the equivalent of staying at a Howard Johnson motel. The idea of living on the land for ten days seemed ludicrous, and yet there was this strong pull, a beckoning. It seemed to be more than tangible. It resonated and began deep inside my essence, in my center core. I felt it.

Theme Five: Getting Ready to Not Return

Having already agreed on some level of consciousness to not only participate in this journey, but to complete the undertaking, brought trepidations toward the unknown, as well as excitement. An adventure into unknown territory! Remembering faces of dear friends puzzled looks as I shared my plans with them. Being reinforced every step of the way that there was indeed something out there, or in here, that I needed to find, connect or re-connect with. Words simply unavailable, as I try to explain, sounding ungrounded.

Two meetings were scheduled for the group of eight who had agreed to journey together. They were each divided into two sections; a sharing of what was happening in our personal everyday lives, and logistics such as equipment, food, clothing, and personal needs. We were given some reading material, and asked to complete a day on the land to prepare us in part for the journey. Choosing a "spirit guide," a friend, confidant, one with whom I would share my experiences and hear feedback from was required. Researching and collecting or purchasing equipment, deciding on food, clothing, and water to take were on the agenda too.

On a most profound level I felt this journey was about reconciliation for me. Don't quite know why. Wanting the journey to flow smoothly, making amends where needed, leaving this place, where I was, as best I could.

Meeting one of the two guides was quite moving. A knowingness of this person, as if we had met before. When we hugged hello it was a feeling similar to

entering my house in Richmond as I contemplated purchase. A wrapping around from a different origination point. When we looked into each others eyes there was this remembrance for me. No words, simply an awareness.

In my growing up years I knew I was different, as if separate, away from others. An only child, dyslexic, separation played its part out constantly. A recurring dream throughout my life presents me as little, by myself, in this huge field of cut corn. I always see myself from the back. It brings tears to my eyes each time I recall the vignette. Several years may pass, then the dream returns. It seems to come from the deepest part of me, from the other side of the galaxy.

Several years ago, during my transpersonal training with Stanislav Grof I experienced a series of these vignettes. Same field of cut corn. I'm in the middle, observing my own back, except this time I am no longer an infant, I'm fully grown. My current age in fact, sitting in a posture reminiscent of Andrew Wyeth's painting. I was naked. Arms, back and legs covered with concentric circles of blue, black and red. Immediately I felt as if I were a target. Perhaps a target for the bombs whilst my mother was carrying me, being showered nightly on London, during wartime.

It is said that a strong reason for bombing London so methodically, so consistently, with thousands of bombs had more to do with superstition than war strategy. English folklore describes a family of ravens living in the Tower of London as being linked to the rise and fall of the British people. It is said that when the ravens leave the Tower, London will fall. During the entire bombardment of London the ravens never left, and are still there to this day. Being a target resonates within

me. Taking on controversial issues such as lobbying for ethical and accountable government and campaign finance revisions or co-chairing a fundraiser for AIDS sufferers for example separates me from the community as I become a focus for personal opinion.

Watching myself with all these concentric marks over the back of my body, my head began to turn slowly to the left. Turning until our eyes met, I connected with a part of me so powerful, so beyond language that tears simply welled and fell in streams down my face, dripping onto the floor. As I write this, now, I realize that the slow turning of the head to the left reflected from my near-death experience. In that experience I turned and saw earth. This time I turned and saw me. Perhaps we are one!

Turning to the left to meet this guide, our eyes engaged and I was catapulted into a deep, seemingly dark, yet full space. Perhaps a void, reminiscent of feelings when meeting my own eyes in that cut corn field or seeing the earth from afar. A powerful initiation of sorts. No words, simply an arising awareness. Perhaps an underscoring that this was indeed the road to travel at this moment in time, outcomes to be measured later.

A letter of intent was a required exercise before the wilderness journey began. Actually writing, laying out on a piece of paper the reasons for my wanting to journey to the land was somewhat revealing. Understanding deep within that to begin something new meant a clearing away of the old, not only ritually but authentically. Spending time at Richmond Hill, an ecumenical retreat center close by where I lived

provided chapel space for simply sitting and being.

I lived in this wonderful old house built in 1860 and used as a hospital extension for war soldiers during the first six years of its life. I bought this house after walking in the front door and feeling it wrap itself around me. A beautiful compelling hug. Unusual. Different. From another space and time. Visitors have seen confederate soldiers in this house. I haven't. Simply felt their presence. But several have described this one particular confederate soldier who sat on the front staircase with a bandaged head spotted with blood. When asked if I thought the house was haunted I didn't quite know how to answer. I don't think of things in that light. I merely feel their presence. Certainly after my near-death some twenty plus years earlier I've felt the presence of the light in many ways.

What I digress to share are my remembrances of the one Easter I walked the stations of the cross, several miles through the historic Church Hill area of Richmond. At each station two people participated. One carried the cross, one read the text. I had volunteered to carry the cross for the last leg. It was a heavy cross made of old knotty 4x4 with large rusty nails where hands and feet could have been. As I carried the cross and felt the weight, tired no doubt from the previous walking, it was as if I became the cross. The nails were embedded in my shoulder bruising me and drawing blood and yet the exhilaration I felt was of another nature. It reminded me of my experience of near-death. I merged it seemed with the wood. Boundaries blurred. My legs were getting tired and weak. People asked if they could help. I refused.

Back at Richmond Hill we settled in with refreshments and I went to sit in the chapel. A light appeared in the vaulted ceiling. Golden white, edges tinged with blue. I knew this light. It got bigger and bigger. Inside the light I saw trees and fields and rivers and then a face. A familiar face. A face of knowingness. Bathed in this light I simply basked. Eventually the light diminished. I stayed a little longer then went to find some tea and found the retreat center's director with whom I shared my story. He understood. For the skeptics, and believe me I am one too, it was not so much the course of events, whether they were real or not, it had much more to do with what seemed to be an internal reorganization of understanding, as if my body and mind were connecting, merging, or transcending.

Why is this important to me, these holotropic experiences? Because my congruence, my inner and outer worlds are appearing to come together, to merge. It is as if I have found a new way to discern, differentiate, that is from a core place. Not originating from mind or intuition but rather connecting, re-connecting one with the other. I felt peaceful. Right-minded. Boundaries sharp and clear.

I continued with my journey preparation and wanted to leave this world of reality either as I had come into it, suggesting no change, or leave it better than when I entered, suggesting improvement. I found myself simply sitting and remembering. Thoughts came to mind of things I had said whilst angry, things I had done spitefully, family and friends with whom I no longer had relationship. Two full weeks were spent with no agenda other than to simply let the voices speak through me. Allowing vignettes of people, places, things to manifest in my imagination. Sometimes I

replayed my remembrances in full. Towards the end of the time period I had allocated for this project I received two letters in the mail on consecutive days.

The first was from a friend of thirty years with whom I had lost touch. A letter acknowledging our past time together with gratitude, telling me of her mother's death and her aloneness. Her residence had changed, telephone number, job also. I probably would never have found her if I had gone looking, and as I had also moved was uncertain as to how she found me.

The other letter began; "You were six years old when I last saw you." I'm now in my fifties. She was my aunt living in Fiji at the time, now moving back to her native New Zealand. She was often in my thoughts. What serendipity. What timing! No! I didn't make this happen. It happened as a result of my desired reconciliation I feel certain. It seemed to come from a place lacking personal will, a place of relinquishment, on my part.

Some of my reconciliation letters were written, then ritually buried or burned. Sometimes I simply acknowledged remembrances in my imagination and let them go. It was as if I was simply experiencing a parade of circumstances rather like bereavement workers speak of in Hospice care. This parade of circumstances, the dash between the birth year and the death year on a gravestone being acknowledged, felt fully then relinquished.

Selecting a "spirit guide," a person with whom I could relate, talk with, receive feedback from was simple. Louis was my neighbor, friend, fellow journeyer, and expressive writer. I simply telephoned her one day and appreciated her immediate

response in the affirmative. Reclaiming our ancient cultural wisdom, connecting the past with the present can be literally or metaphorically clumsy. In ancient days, living by the river in families (clans) a spirit guide may well have been a family member or a shaman. In our modern city life, spirit guides are often advisors, counselors, pastors or ministers, maybe even medical practitioners. A spirit guide for me was a touchstone. Someone who knew my journey, was able to be autonomous in their observations and would permit my meadowland enough sunshine within which to grow, without being crowded out by encroaching trees, brambles and thickets. Lois and I met over tea as I shared my plans.

A day on the land, a preparational requirement, to get used to not being in the city became an event. Rising before dawn, taking water only, dressing in layers because the temperature change anticipated was from forty to seventy five degrees. It was April thirteenth. The alarm was piercing before six a.m. and Acer, my companion Welsh Corgi was uncertain why he was eating breakfast in the dark. It was cold, around the freezing mark. I took my long parka and left the house. Already the birds were chirping, a predawn bird followed by a dawn bird sing by my window daily. The sky was getting lighter. I took water and sage and a candle, layers of clothing, and nothing else, even though I suffer dramatically with bug bites, the spray remained at home. Speeding down the highway with little other traffic, I could see the sky getting lighter and lighter. The moon sinking toward the west as the guts spewed out of factory chimney stacks, towards the sky. Tears ran down my cheeks, I know not why. Having arranged to spend the day in the state park, arriving hours before

they officially opened necessitated leaving my car outside the facilities at the edge of the road. It was cold and I wasn't used to it. I had forgotten my gloves and stuck my hands deep inside my parka pockets. The sun had yet to rise fully although the light was providing much visibility. There was a star or planet near where the light was the brightest that dimmed into extinction as the sun rose up. The moon was full and so clear, sinking into the opposite horizon. What a glorious sight.

As I began my walk away from the parking area, following the bicycle trail into the park, I was becoming more aware of the cold. I could see my breath before me. Clouds of mist hovered wherever there was water, as if I were entering some ancient mystical arena. The birds were the only ones that seemed to be up, dressed and ready for the day, chirping loudly, reminding me of the beach at Hilton Head where Acer and I walked each day for a week before dawn and watched the sunrise. Birds came out from the trees as if on cue. First the little ones with the high pitched voices, then the medium sized birds with a lower pitch voice, and then the really big birds came, as if there were some order to this universe.

As I walked, meandered, I felt the cold more and wanted so to build a fire. The sun had appeared now. As the moon slipped from sight below the opposite horizon light began to rise into the heavens, bringing warmth slowly to the surroundings. Other sounds were emerging from the previous stillness. The smell of a skunk filled the air and suddenly, just ahead, a small herd, four, five, no, six white tailed deer began scampering into the trees. The ground shook. I felt the vibration awakening throughout my body as if stretching to begin the day. Finding a seat I lit

the candle, prepared some sage, and asked the universe that I be awake to what was being shown me. A desire for guidance. The forest was strangely quiet, even with the birds singing. There was little movement within the forest itself and I felt quite small sitting there under those huge trees.

There was much to see. Flowers growing in the least likely of places. Out of the gravel trail, growths springing forth from trees uprooted by previous storms. The smallest of trees, some only inches high beginning their journey toward the sun alongside their parents already towering above them as protective sentinels. Trees knurled with growths almost cancerous in appearance, bark wrapped tight around. Trees with branches encompassing each other sheltering, hugging, dancing in the light.

The mist was disappearing now, the sun rising to about two in the sky clock. I found a spot near some water to pause and let the sun stream on my face. I was grateful. It felt simply wonderful. Water, in the form of a lake, was moving with speed over a dam. Roaring, it drowned out all the birds but the mallards who were dancing with each other in some springtime ritual. I found a log upon which to sit, and comfort in my water supply. The water was pouring over the dam creating a small whirlpool in front of where I was seated. A section of what appeared to be a water lily had been uprooted and was making its way downstream. It suddenly got off stream, caught in a side flow, and was brought towards shore, around, to rejoin the main flow again. I stared at the embankment. By a large uprooted tree the relationship between the water and the tree had changed. The tree was moving. I

looked across the river, up the river and down the river then back to the moving tree, and it was still moving. "What do you want of me," I asked of the tree. Hearing no immediate answer, I meandered some more.

The sun was finally getting warmer. I could undo my coat, chillybumps finally disappearing. I walked some more. The undulating territory bending into steeper territory. Stopping to look, there was this old, old tree beckoning me. Clearly it was a wise old tree with gnarled roots above the ground, snake like. Nestling in one of the hollows created by the roots and facing the rising sun over the lake it was as if I was transported into another reality. The sun dancing on the water was sparkling, crystal like. As the wind picked up, patterns were created on the water spreading the dancing, ebbing and flowing rhythmically. It became difficult to take my eyes from the grandeur, as if I were participating in the dance in some way. Some time later my eyes closed and nap time was upon me. When I awoke refreshed, and looked around, the sun had risen beyond the reflective level on the water. The dancing had ended.

My eyes shifted from the water to the ground. There are so many different types of moss. I love moss. It reminds me of home, England that is! There's that wonderful flat moss, velvety to the eyes and to the touch, then there's the type that has tiny flowers on long gangly stalks, pale green to dark green, low to the ground to an inch tall. There were even some with curly cues, thick and spongy, all around this one wise old tree with bark sporting carved initials. I ran my fingers over the cuts and felt the pain, tears appearing softly in the corners of my eyes.

After finding an appropriate place, I stooped only to discover my urination

skills lacked a sense of direction, one foot was in the path. How, I thought, am I going to get through ten days without city facilities. There were lots of small biting insects hovering around my head. This was not unusual for me to experience but having brought no insect repellent, posed an interesting dilemma, considering my allergic reaction to their bites. A mosquito lit on my forehead. An automatic reaction left it dead, after apologies. Another rested on my cheek and followed a similar fate. After that, however, even though they continued to hover and once in a while lit, none bit. I remembered my father who said the best way to keep aphids away from tomato plants was to kill a few and wipe them on the leaves of the tomato plant, after which the aphids will stay their distance. It worked!

The sun was now approaching mid point in the sky and I supposed it was noon time. I felt a need to start back, primarily because I had acquired a blister on my toe and was getting tired in the lower leg muscles. I had probably ventured three or four miles at this point.

I felt a tension in my mind. It would be relatively easy for me to stay in the forest I thought. The only creatures I had become noticeably wary of were other human beings. The animals, bugs, snakes seemed to keep to their own territory. Should I simply observe the tension or am I to do something with it? A profound thought I imagined. Buddhist teaching asks that attachment to things be relinquished. Newton's Second Law says that things don't move unless impacted upon. So where I wondered does action fit, particularly social action. When do I reach out? Or do I simply sit and observe, understanding, merging, but outwardly not acting, not even an

extra-terrestrial touch of the finger? Realizing that with each step I take, grass, bugs, living things get squished underfoot. Do I simply live my life, walking softly, in reverence apologizing for every step I take? Even consideration of this posture would slow my life greatly, but then this is the question, isn't it? Reach the goals, quickly, expediently as modern city dwellers teach or act in concert, gatekeeping our earth, being one with this place slowly, as ancient cultures did. Or maybe, development of a personal congruence dictating when to sit and when to act intuitively is best.

I started back slowly, meandering, returning to the river where I packed my jacket and shirt into the backpack I had brought. It was hot now. More refreshing water passed over my tongue particularly satisfying as I hadn't eaten supper the night before. Discovering that water was truly satisfying. Sitting under another tree, I watched an ant carry a dead fly until it was out of sight. What an enormous task, I thought. There were several different varieties of ants; big ones, little ones, black, brown and red. And those spiders with the large center body and long skinny legs. There was this one spider that was compact, black, size of a dime with a brilliant red sack attached to its rear. I wondered whether it was poisonous. As long as I did not interfere with them they did not seem to interfere with me. There were these tiny birds, no more than four inches in length. A bright blue one and a gray one with black stripes on the underbelly, with the most chattering language. Squirrels abounded, and the butterflies were magnificent, huge, yellow and black, and smaller all white. One was all black, with a hairy body.

Continuing to walk, the misty morning magical appearance had given way to

an intense sunlight. Stopping every few feet to listen, look, sense, take in. Teeny tiny flowers, white, lavender, pink in color with delicate petals and inner parts, some the size of a pin head were in abundance. A rock attracted my attention and I decided, after inner intuitive discussion that she could come home with me for a while. I felt a gratitude for the forests' abundant wisdom, having experienced and seen so many things with new eyes. The sun was now beginning to set and I wasn't sure of where I was. I could hear a woodpecker drumming on a tree in the distance, and began snapping my fingers in rhythm.

Rounding a corner and finding a wooden seat I lay down, and using my jacket as a head rest dozed off in the afternoon sunshine. Something bit my wrist, and I awoke suddenly. Looking up at the sun, feeling disoriented I continued my journey eventually, finding familiar territory seeing my car off in the distance. The car clock indicated I had been in the forest for nine and a half hours. I had seen so much, experienced so much, yet the day had flown by.

Many elements inform death. The experience of letting go engages our body somatics, perhaps even the autonomic nervous system. In twelve step systems the idea of surrender and the action of surrender can be incongruent. Similarly with letting go. Preparation for death, a letting go requires the action of surrender. Space being created to simply acknowledge. Getting affairs in order, making amends, making it right with the world, listing possessions of importance for distribution like seeds to the wind, should I not return. When I don't return.

My companion dog, Acer, ailing in health, presented an important dilemma

for me. Being away for ten days was a long time in dog hours. Boarding him was out of the question. He would pine for me as he had before and not eat. The two Acer keepers who generally house-sat while I was gone were unavailable. Taking him to the forest with me was not permitted. Acer had been diagnosed with kidney disease when he was four years old. Opting not for surgery but for changing his diet reduced the growths quite dramatically although we always knew it would eventually be a finality. I had decided to take him to relatives in South Carolina although there was always this intuitive understanding that he wanted to come with me to the wilderness.

Eight weeks prior to the departure date and just two days after my day walk in the state park, he suddenly took a turn for the worst. Within a twenty-four hour period he had stopped eating, becoming lifeless, eyes clouded, and bladder uncontrollable. I laid him on some old blankets in a position easy for him to breathe for the evening readying to be at the vets by dawn the next morning. We slept on the floor, my arms around his head, scrunching his ears, waking every few minutes to squirt water into his mouth. I'm not too sure why I felt a need to do this. Perhaps remembering the refreshing taste of water during my day walk without food. Placing him in the reclining front seat of my car en route to the vets singing "Acer" songs, my right hand never left his body. I held him on the operating table one hand on his head the other around his paw, on his chest, feeling his heartbeat. His paw was shaved. A needle inserted. Three erratic breaths, then the final exhalation.

He was cremated and came to the wilderness in a spice jar, ashes to be scattered to the wind.

Theme Six: Death of a Different Kind

Death is all around us. Not so much the physical elements, observed by the senses externally, but the internal ramifications. We see the dying of the flowers, trees going into winter hibernation and seem divorced, cut off from them. Tragic reports in local newspapers or on radio or television bring gasps. Popular television shows, "ER," "The Practice," "Law and Order," provide ample gory details. Are we numb? Does the effect stop at the skin or does it impact us? I wonder.

When I was five years old my grandmother died. Dad's mom. She was a task master, a fierce looking woman, tall and striking who let me play her piano. At the funeral there was an open casket and I was picked up and held close to her face to kiss her goodbye. Fifty years later that vignette is etched in my memory banks. Permanent I'm sure. It was scary. I can still feel her skin.

While in college a friend telephoned me in need of support. When I arrived at his apartment the door was open and he was gone from sight. Driving around the neighborhood on my motor scooter I eventually found him, curled up in the gutter, shivering, vomiting, crying. Later he died. Some kind of drug overdose. He seemed nice enough. Came from a British Commonwealth country far away. He talked often about being pressured to do well.

I felt some of that pressure too. Although my family seemed less frenetic about my scholastic success I still enrolled in an engineering program at College, unusual for a woman. I liked mathematics, spatial relationship. Seeing how things

worked with each other. I remember arguing strenuously with my math professor over the elimination of negative problem answers simply because they were below the horizon and considered not relevant. Remembering saying that nothing in nature was ever meaningless and just because we humans couldn't figure out the reasons didn't imply we simply eliminated half the answers. Brazen, I was called. Actually I wasn't disrespectful, one couldn't be in England, it wasn't allowed. I simply didn't understand the logic professed. Professor and I talked on several occasions about spatial relationship and he actually became my mentor in many ways. The idea of standing my ground, not being afraid to speak my mind has always been with me. When I questioned him I was simply responding in the moment not giving any thought to future repercussions. Puzzled and confused I quested for answers. Truthful, authentic, sensible answers. Simple too!

Nan, my mother's mother took my hand one day and walked with me to the bottom of her lovely garden. "I'll not see you again" she said holding my arm tightly. She told me not to be afraid, that she had enjoyed a good life, and she made me promise I would always try new things and never be afraid of failing, because she said, "You can always come home." I felt certain she meant the after-life, where she was getting ready to go. That was the last time I saw her in the flesh. She passed peacefully during the night. She taught me much. I felt bonded to her because of the times we had shared together. And I never felt her distant from me, and don't, not even today. In fact I often talk to her and see her bright smiling face looking at me in my dreams. Death didn't seem real or authentic, I thought. One minute someone is

here the next moment they are not. Her very essence permeates me. No, I don't mean I'm attached to her, unable to let her go or she unable to let me go. I simply walk with her. She is an intimate part of my life.

My mom died two years later suffering tremendously with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (Lou Gehrig's Disease). She thought she had some type of cancer. No one told her otherwise. Why do we not tell this truth? I felt my mother's presence close by for several years after she died, not quite knowing whether I was unable to let her go or whether she simply did not want to go. It may have been some of both. She was not quite fifty when she passed over. I was twenty-five. I did have guilt feelings over her death. My father was a strict disciplinarian, I would have categorized him abusive, with a horrible temper. When I emigrated here I asked her to come too. She wouldn't. Said it was for better or for worse. I remember waving goodbye to her sadness at dockside as the ship sailed. I felt her loss. No way to change it though.

The year following my mother's death I experienced an industrial accident. My heart ceased for several seconds on the operating table. Finding myself up on the ceiling looking down on myself as emergency room personnel scurried around calling for blood matching and fibrillation units, cutting my clothes off my body while working on my heart was extraordinary. How could I have been up there looking at myself down there at the same time? And that's only the first of many questions which came roaring to my mind. I lost my sense of time, fear of death, fear in general. Felt connected to all things, a new empowerment to be truthful in all matters,

an experience of fragmentation with re-connective healing in new and different ways. Wondering whether we each had to experience fragmentation, a blowing apart to dislodge all the attachments so that the chips may fall into different configurations. Is this cellular healing? Words fail me every time I try to share the depth of my near-death experience with anyone. There is no language. How can I tell someone I touched the power of the universe. That this must be what touching the face of God is like. Awesome. Felt it in my center core.

I spent time getting ready for this adventure in the wilderness and wrote a last will and testament. Identifying where all my possessions, valuables, jewelry were and deciding who, if anyone, was to receive what upon my death was a new and rewarding task. Enabling me to look at the importance of each item in my possession, remember how I came by it and who I would want to have it was time consuming. Noticing that what I felt would be valuable may not be received that way. But after the process was complete, I was ready to say farewell to this life I had lived, and not return as the same person.

The purchase of equipment, food and clothing was an exercise in itself. Pairs of woolen socks, gloves, hat, warm parka, thermal underwear were needed. Deciding upon foodstuffs which would not spoil was difficult. Nuts and dried fruits being the easiest, lightest in weight and taking little space. A good sleeping bag, warm, for freezing temperatures was necessary, as well as a back pack, daypack, flashlight, plastic bags, rope, penknife and the like. Layered clothing, spares for times when the rain would come. Tarps, tent, high top sneakers, as much as possible being

waterproof. How unready I was to live outside the city!

Theme Seven: Ten Days of Absence

We were all coming from different geographic directions. After several changes in plans, somewhat discombobulating, most of us agreed to meet in Bumpass and car pool. Our two guides were meeting us at Grayson Highlands State Park and one other participant was driving from North Carolina. Another of our group decided to drive by himself and started out a day ahead, driving slowly, more due to his older vehicle than a need to see the countryside.

Six of us then met on Wednesday afternoon. The originally planned sweat lodge for the day had been canceled and so we gathered in the afternoon bringing a supper to share, our equipment, ten gallons of water each, readying for an early morning departure to arrive at Grayson Highlands State Park by noon on the following day. Packing up the cars became a ritual as well as a chore. Carrying that amount of water in addition to our backpacks necessitated taking three vehicles instead of the planned two.

Stopping en route, losing a car in traffic, eventually re-connecting, sharing refreshment breaks we arrived at Grayson Highlands State Park a little after noontime on Thursday afternoon. Guides arriving shortly thereafter and waiting for our missing participant who had incorrect directions pushed our rendezvous time into the middle of the afternoon. Rain clouds were approaching, looking ominous. After our guides consulted with the park rangers a nearby motel became our first nights' stay. An unexpected salad bar, cozy accommodations, nine of us piled into two rooms for the

night. One of us had decided to stay at the park and camp for the night. A request for medical release forms to be signed brought a discussion about unwanted medical assistance and a realization that medics would be further than a few moments away, raising trepidations in some.

An early breakfast, a short drive and we were hiking toward our camping location. A ranger truck had taken the water supply, 100 gallons together with the largest backpacks up the steepest inclines. Most of us hiked with full day packs up the trail, a mile or so to our camping site, where tents were pitched and the remainder of the day was spent carrying water from the drop off point to the campsite. Dinner was prepared in a large pot, augmented with fresh breads, and we sat readying for the journey ahead. The rains came again just after we had eaten and we piled into the largest tent. Squashed inside, feet hanging over feet, we listened, talked, and prepared for the next few days.

The following day, Saturday in between the rain showers we walked the area looking for an appealing place to spend our time in solitude. A place which felt particularly comfortable, perhaps even called to us in some way. A place where we would spend our four days and nights. Each of us went in different directions and after much terrain searching I decided to move just a few feet from where I had pitched my tent initially realizing on some level of consciousness it really didn't really matter where I was. We had each brought breakfast and lunch foodstuffs to have on our own while group sharing occurred around dinner time. After another pot of vegetables and breads, more sharing, listening, speaking and being present as

preparation for the journey continued.

Sunday morning we prepared to leave our last connection with this small community and travel to a place of solitude. Ceremony saw us leave our place of collection. I simply moved my tent some twenty feet, on the edge of the campsite, facing due east, looking down the valley towards the Blue Ridge Mountains.

For the next four days and nights we were simply to be with our selves. Fasting, drinking a gallon of water each day. Each of us had a "rock pile buddy," someone who we were geographically close with, that each day in the morning, one of us would raise a rock pile in a prescribed location, and in the afternoon the other would take it down. Each day we would perform this task, letting each other know the other was close by. Should the rock pile not have been tended to the guides would have been alerted to search. Still, if anything happened, a fall or a poisonous bite, several hours would pass before help could be summoned.

The last night was to be a sleepless night. Centering ourselves in a prepared circle of stones we would simply be with the night, through the night, open for our visions, insights and awareness to surface. For us, this was the night of a full moon.

After first light the following morning we were to begin to pack up our tent and belongings and return to camp. A ceremonial return fed with fresh fruit chunks provided an appreciated welcome. After acknowledging each other and settling in, re-pitching our tents a fire was lit, primarily to dry out our clothing from the devastating storms, rain and mist from the previous four days. Rain showers still pervaded the day. In between them we gathered, ate, listened and talked.

The following day, Friday, saw continued gatherings, sharing, storytelling, food preparations and time in nature. Saturday, shortly after sunrise we prepared to break camp, gather our belongings, and after a ceremonial closing, began our descent to the car park. After loading our cars, posing for photographic opportunities and farewells we began our journey back to the real world.

Remembering these ten days emotionally provided context beyond the logical framework. Observations were powerful. I'm not sure how I feel about plans changing mid stream. I guess it depends on how invested I am. Wanting to make certain I had everything I really needed, and to be sparing and light at the same time was uppermost in my mind. This became challenging in the midst of changing plans. Some participants became visibly nervous, anxious and although I had my trepidations I felt a sense of adventure within and became innocently excited. So, changing plans, missed directions mattered less to me than to others on this journey.

Meeting at Bumpass we debriefed some about the canceled sweat lodge allowing room for folks to simply vent their disappointment. Each of us had brought some delicious foodstuffs, mostly vegetarian. We curled up in our sleeping bags like sardines in a small living room each having vivid dreams and laughing at our circumstances.

My dreams had been profound in recent nights, coming in spurts. Several nights without remembrances followed by several nights of vivid episodes in technicolor. The night before I took my one day journey to the state park for example, I dreamed of little snakes. They were being born and sliding over my feet. I

was without a reference point, not knowing where I was. Seeing my feet and watching these little snakes run over them was quite detailed however. Another snake became attached to my temple, my right temple. It was flat against my head, its head on my head. It's head was triangular and flat. I remember feeling no fear, no pain, just an observer self. I did ask someone to remove the snake from my head although I'm unaware as to who.

And before that, readying for the first group meeting months before, my dreams had taken me to the mountains. Backpacking, I needed to climb a rocky area. Partway up the rocks I heard the rattles and looked up. There by my hand, on the ledge was a rattlesnake, coiled and attentive. Looking down I saw another slither directly underneath my foot, coil and look up. I couldn't move either up or down. I felt the tension within. Stuck. How to proceed? Let go. Simply let go and fall. I let go and fell, waking up suddenly.

On this one particular night, also months before, the dreams were intense. Tossing and turning sleep finally came. This huge spider, up on its legs, stood directly in front of me, several inches off the ground. Taking off my shoe, I hammered it to death. It then rolled over and suddenly I was tickling its tummy. This dead spider started laughing. It had a belly button and smooth skin. Awaking, I found myself scratching my own tummy.

In the morning at first light, we got ourselves packed and on the road early, heading off for our journey. Three of us bundled into my small station wagon, followed by the "water truck" and another sports utility vehicle with all the back

packs on board. The caravan set forth down the highway pulling off for bathroom visits, juice and coffee breaks. Coffee, the last sense of civilization we observed. We were giggly, like little kids going on vacation, singing songs and making fun with each other.

Approaching southwest Virginia demanded attention. Beautiful rivers, undulating territory getting steeper, passing through villages and small towns eventually turning into Grayson Highlands State Park. We parked and wandered around, finding cows, wild turkey, and wild, brown, bunny rabbits. But those cows, such faces, as if they were speaking with us. Waiting for the guides and the lost participant to arrive simply provided more time to enjoy the scenery and wander around the ranger station. Then the rains came, quite suddenly, as if from nowhere. One moment it was nicely sunny, the next cloudy, misty and raining. And, such torrential rain it was. With the news from the ranger station that storms were in the area and with everyone having arrived we headed to the largest town and a motel.

The salad bar was unexpected and delicious although I must admit I wasn't overly happy at the delay and loss of a day in the wilderness. We divided into two rooms and settled down for the night. I'm not a breakfast eater. Don't know why, never have been. Knowing all the medical suggestions for eating heartily in the morning it just isn't my shtick. Feeling invaded by the guide when required to eat something for energy. Ingesting seemed forced and unnatural.

Off we went in a car caravan arriving back at Grayson Highlands State Park in the sunshine. Loading our water on to a ranger truck, backpacks for some of us too,

the truck drove closer to the camping site while the rest of us hiked up the mile or so trail, crossed over onto Mt. Rogers, state to federal land, and continued on the Appalachian Trail for about half a mile to a sheltered area seemingly carved out of the side of the mountain. There we put up our tents. Some of us, me for one, this was the first time pitching a tent, although I had practiced at home. Bringing a small pup tent just large enough for me paled in comparison to some of the other top of the line models. It would suffice however.

Once pitched, the remainder of the day was spent getting all the water to base camp, unpacking our back and day packs, preparing for supper and simply getting climatized for our first sunset. In the evening time the cows came, as well as a rather large black bull who took a fancy to one of the participants. Not in any frightening manner simply being present with her. Sitting in a circle, smudging with sage, chowing down on a hot mug full of thick soup with a selection of breads seemed natural. Our voices carried in the night air. We could hear others on the Appalachian Trail. A participant mentioned the murders on the Trail last year and how the perpetrator hadn't been caught. Rumors suspected a local man and some of us became fearful. We talked some, listened some and watched the sun be covered by a light mist. Eerie, like a fog I was familiar with from back home in England. The mist was getting heavier, and soon the rain followed and we adjourned for the night to the largest tent, scrunched together, feet hanging over feet. Darkness came and so did the heavier rain.

Urination and defecation suddenly became an event not to be taken for

granted. After all, modern bathroom facilities make life much easier. But to depart for the woods armed with a trowel, a few sheets of toilet tissue and a plastic bag was a new experience, especially in the rain. Digging a hole large enough, deep enough then covering it over, keeping the used tissues in a plastic baggie to take home, thus keeping the forest pristine, became a ritual. With the constant rain, in a small pup tent, I became a master at urinating within a half inch of the top of the cup, then carefully unzipping the tent flap, was able to hurl the contents a fair distance.

The next few days seemed to fold into each other. Walking the land provided a drama of wild life unfolding. Beautiful deer, little rabbits, incredibly shrill birds, yackity birds and just plain old big birds. Wild horses and ponies and those cows with their soft big brown eyes, just looking. I must have walked miles. All over. Several different trails, finding a few streams, sitting on rocks. Sitting on rocks and being amazed that life came to visit me within such a short space of time, if I were quiet. Simply quiet. The days when the sun shone were hot, the nights cold, although it was the rain and the thunderstorms which permeated the air, and my essence so. My appetite was dwindling and we hadn't even begun to fast yet. Feeling myself sinking into the land particularly when laying on the grass, as if I could get under her skin.

Looking for a place for myself seemed strange. All the places seemed attractive. The hills, the streams, the dales finally giving myself permission to simply be where I was, at base camp. We had been instructed to take tarps and tie them to the trees so that we may sleep underneath. That thought brought some anxiety for me with my disabled right hand and may have played into my staying at base camp in my

pup tent, although I guess I could have taken my tent elsewhere. One place seemed as good as the next.

My pup tent was so small I'm surprised claustrophobia didn't set in, but it didn't. I moved my tent a few feet to the edge of base camp facing due east wanting to catch the sunrises, the setting sun being behind the mountain and out of sight. Inside the tent was an eggcrate style pad two feet wide, upon which my sleeping bag rested. I had a few inches of space available between the edge of the pad and the sides of the tent. Stretching the full length of my sleeping bag, my head and toes were touching either end of the tent. Sitting in my stadium chair in the center my head touched the top. A zippered flap opening, leaving some netting keeping out the bugs, was at the front. Inside my tent was a change of clothes, my heavy parka, a t-shirt, and water, although most of it was stashed outside, a flashlight and toiletries. It was a tight fit.

Exploring with the guides our personal desires, visions, intentions, surrenderings and struggles occupied the evening time. Recognizing that trust was crucial at this time. How much would I divulge of my inner workings? I could feel my grandmother close by, mother too. She was evident in many ways, mostly cognitive. Connections, remembrances, re-connections from biographical times. I had been quite focused during the preceding months on relinquishing, letting go, or surrendering of memories reconciled. Letting go of my companion dog Acer, readying my house for sale, leaving my job of fifteen years to begin my doctoral studies, canceling health insurance as it was beyond my financial capabilities,

surrender seemed to be in the air. Not to mention the death of my father during the previous year after a six-year battle with cancer. Marking my time by leaving a last will and testament, saying goodbye to my life as it was, opening to the here and now was quite exciting. Certainly more exciting than scary. But it was more than that for me, much more. I had not only left my old self to take on a new, but I had dedicated my new self to the will of the universe. Here I need to digress a little.

My background did not include much formal religious training. I did not discover my Jewish heritage until I was twenty-one, probably because of wartime England. Being a war baby, anti-jewish sentiment was too close geographically and the family opted for secrecy. My Grandmother was always in touch with her spirituality, reading biblical text she was my touchstone, my mentor. She even used a ouija board. It was she who taught me there were no boundaries to the spirit world. She was a generous woman who grew magnificent flowers and baked fabulous cookies. Biscuits we called them. I was always fascinated with comparative religions and faith in general, simply had little formal training. Bible school was attended probably because the minister lived next-door and had a Harley Davidson motor cycle upon the back of which I attended church for a few years, at least until archery classes fell on Sunday afternoons.

Meeting students from British Commonwealth countries at college intrigued me especially after hearing of their cultures and customs. My near-death experience had simply connected me with a universal omnipotence I believed to be God. I could feel it within, in the very core of my being. It was this core that had been developing

within, getting larger with each Holotropic Breathwork session. I felt a commitment towards spirit. A desire that my life, from this moment on, was to be guided by universal wisdom's will, not mine. That I was simply here on earth to fulfill the role of being, finding my place. Sounds nebulous, doesn't it? It has more to do with faith, surrender and walking with spirit, although I'm feeling this is the place of true reality.

And so my intention was to simply ask the universe to empty me of all my worldly human wants and desires, and fill me with spirit. It was as if I were asking to live a life of service. And in a way it was fulfilling a childhood dream. After my parents took me to see the movie Ben Hur I wrote to the leper colony in Hong Kong inquiring how I could help. Now, some fifty years later it seems I am becoming more childlike. As if I have come full circle, although not arriving back at the place of beginning. Reminding me of a passage from the Gnostic Book of St. Thomas (1990), credited to Jesus:

"When you make the two one and
 when you make the inside like the outside and
 the outside like the inside and
 the above like the below and
 when you make the male and the female one and the same,
 so that the male not be male nor the female female;
 and when you fashion eyes in place of an eye, and
 a hand in place of a hand, and
 a foot in place of a foot, and
 a likeness in place of a likeness;
 then will you enter the kingdom."

(38)

The morning departure for our time of solitude was quite moving. A smudging ceremony and an official send-off watching everyone go in their respective directions

not quite sure what to expect when each of us returned a few days later. Soon after I got to my tent, a short journey, the weather closed in. Becoming misty I simply retired, sitting in the center, cross-legged, Buddha like, watching the rain, drinking water, and urinating. Hardly moving from that position over the next four days. The weather became atrocious. Rain, rain and more rain. That evening a thunderstorm so fierce, the lightning struck close by violently shaking the ground upon which I was sitting. I felt my whole body shaking, vibrating. Fasting, drinking water only left my body with hourly urination demands.

How could my life be so full doing so little? Watching the weather, the animals, drinking, urinating, and sleeping. That's all I did, literally. The weather was fascinating and kept my attention. Rain, lightning, thunder claps, sunshine in the distance, mist. Animals wandering, especially the cows who came right into camp and up to my tent netting. I found myself dozing frequently. In between the thundershowers I assembled my rock circle for the last night, collecting lots of wood hopeful the sun would emerge for drying purposes. After the first day my tent began to leak. So did my shoes. Rain gear was useless, discovering the plastic bag over the foot into the shoe routine. Fortunately the leaking tent water would run to the sides. Being on a slight incline the water formed two trenches on either side of me and ran to the front of the tent exiting at the seams.

Stuck. I was stuck in this position. In this tiny pup tent, with water leaking and running down both sides. Maneuvering was traumatic. I mastered my small space with a sense of accomplishment. During the second day I looked out towards the mist

across the ravine to the trees. I hadn't seen the other side of the ravine in days. The wind was blowing and the trees were swaying gently, rhythmically. Soon I imagined them to be African women, of various stature, swaying to the music of the wind. Rubbing my eyes, not certain of exactly what I was seeing, the rhythms became more intense. It was as if I became the rhythms, vibrations filling my body. Then I saw my companion dog Acer dancing also. The rhythms became louder and louder and I could feel the earth moving under me as if drumming the same rhythm as the drumming on my head when I became a buffalo during Holotropic Breathwork sessions; just as I remembered the earth moving from when I was a young child. Tears simply streamed from my eyes remembering this magical connection. And, tears fall softly as I write this too.

Making notches on my wooden stick marked the days and building my daily rock pile for connection with my "buddy" were the only places of grounded reality. On the third day I felt my right arm becoming numb. I couldn't move it, lift it, shift it in any way. Several hours later life was restored to the right arm only to have the left arm become numb, lifeless, unusable. Several more hours went by, into the following day before use was restored. It was a simply moving experience as if my arms were being drained and refilled. Later as I dozed I saw the blood draining and white light filling my arms. That same white light experienced during my near-death, tinged with blue. It was as if I were participating in a magical carpet ride, not in this world but of this world. A place of hallowed ground.

I probably slept more on the last day feeling fatigue after walking short

distances. Noticing my urination had become crystal clear and odorless. The last day was something of a blur. The wind was singing in my ears reminding me of that song "They call the wind Mariah" by Frankie Laine. Certainly the wind was singing, trees were swaying, the ground was vibrating all in some concert of movement. Nothing was still. A full orchestra was playing magnificent overtures. The sights of the mist, the animals, the lightning, the valley, the sunrise, the trees, the rocks all participating in an endless smorgasbord of rhythm. On one rock, just outside my tent was a royal lion, with face etched into the stone. Acer bounded in every direction. Birds called, cows mooed, horses whinnied, all in this ecstatic orchestral rhythm.

Plans to sit within my already built stone circle during the last night diminished as the wind and rain soaked my wood supply and drenched my place. All through the night, there was no sign of the full moon. Too cloudy. I simply sat in my chair and watched out the screened flap. Finally, some stars appeared and eventually the moon was visible, full, weaving in and out of the low clouds. Morning eventually peeked and as the dramatic clouds scurried across the sky it was as if the entranceway of animals bowing to the Lion King, from the movie, had come alive in the sky. The elephants, giraffes, zebras and even Acer were all visible in the morning sky. And I wasn't the only participant to recognize the grandeur or identify the players.

Taking my time, I simply watched the sun rise up in the sky. Feeling the rays upon my face was luxurious, remembering my day walk at the State Park when preparing for this journey. Packing up and walking back to the place we had left took time. Feeling somewhat ungrounded, walking a little uneasy coming back to the

origination point to welcome others upon their return then feasting on chunks of fresh fruit was heaven. Simply heaven!

The remainder of that return day was spent slowly, quietly, relaxing. Noticing my ears were incredibly sensitive to sound, eyes sensitive to sights. The sun was now out fully. Everyone had taken their clothes and hung them out to dry on a nearby tree. Fire had been started in the pit, the first and only fire we were able to enjoy. Dinner in the round, the rain then moved us back into the large tent where we began sharing our stories. Unable to focus much, we enjoyed simply being. For the remainder of the day and the following day stories were shared with mirroring commentary from the guides. A new language was being used, difficult and somewhat harsh for my sensitive ears to hear, others too. The younger guide recounted my experience with my arms, telling it as I had experienced it. Uncanny.

Packing up the next day following ceremony, leaving the area with a fond farewell, provided ample memories. Feelings of connection had been deeply embedded in my being over the last few days. Was this what I came to discover? That Mother Earth was not simply two words but a living, breathing creature. A combination, collection and reflection of us all? An entity with which I could and do have an intricate and innate connection? Makes me wonder why we humans abuse her so?

Theme Eight: Highway Driving on Poached Eggs

Leaving the mountainous area, the place of wind, rain, mist, animals, and scenery was not difficult. After scattering some of Acer's ashes in the wooded area I was ready to return home, to my place of comfort. The thought of sitting in my backyard under the porch, watching the animals that inhabit my fenced in city area was feeling blissful, even desiring. As if returning home from a battle, if not a war, hearing the sound of birds chirping brought curls to my mouth. Thoughts of blue birds, cardinals, and the possum family which had lived with me for the past fourteen years floated across my mind. Oh yes! and the preying mantis family, the chipmunks and the squirrels that lived in the huge pecan tree in my backyard, born they say, more than two hundred years ago. My, what stories are in that tree I thought.

Then suddenly, there were just three of us left in the parking area. For some reason we were the last. Bathroom visits at the ranger station en route to the highway seemed a welcome respite from the previous ten days of naturalness. Sitting on the toilet for a few minutes my thoughts drifted back to the wilderness experiences of trowel in hand with toilet paper readying to stuff into a plastic bag after use. Washing hands, reaching for the doorknob, turning, pulling. Stuck. The lock on the door was stuck. I couldn't open it. I called to my two travel companions. The lock was on my side. It wouldn't budge. This was Sunday. Stuck until the next day when the rangers returned. I was resigned. There were worse places to be stuck. At least in this spacious bathroom I had running water and a toilet. I began to open the window,

undoing the screen but it only opened so far. Not far enough for me to slide my body through, although I could speak with my travel companions. They were going to seek assistance at the next ranger station. As I sat on the lidded toilet seat thoughts came floating through my mind. I would not have locked the door had this strange man not been present in the hallway. Fearing him, I locked the door. Suddenly I felt that had I not feared him, I would not be stuck in this room. Great learning, I thought.

Chuckling to myself I went to the door again. This time the lock unbolted easily, as if it were never a problem to begin with. For some reason I felt as if universal omnipotence was simply playing with me, reminding me that it was always present, even in bathrooms, when fear raised its head.

Into the car we jumped, stopping at the next ranger station to tell them we had escaped and to purchase commemorative t-shirts. Driving away, through the state park and down the winding road towards the city was troublesome, realizing my vision was not finely focused. I drove slowly. Cautiously. Down the winding roadway towards the small villages, then the towns. We were singing songs and giggling, finally realizing we were back in civilization as we passed a McDonald's restaurant. Approaching the city of Roanoke my attention was required in greater detail. Automobiles passing on both sides brought me to the inside, slow lane. Eyes still unable to fully focus. Entering Route 81, a major highway was a virtual nightmare. Huge, long trucks whizzing by at great speeds. I simply stayed in the slow lane traveling very fast it seemed at 55 mph. After several minutes realizing my hands were simply clenched on the steering column, my body tight and tense, shoulders in

particular. Noticing my desire for a candy bar and some coffee seemed incongruent coming from ten days of no sugar and no caffeine. But I felt as if I needed to speed up to match everything else on the road. That feeling of needing to speed up, to catch up with everyone else, was particularly powerful. The drive emanated from my center core, the same place from which my connection with omnipotent universe seemed to spring. Is this how I recognize truth or is it simply that the duality exists simultaneously? Mmmm! Profound, I thought.

I remembered driving home from Massachusetts after experiencing a week long workshop with Jack Kornfield, Ph.D. and Stanislav Grof, M.D., a combination of Vipassana Meditation and Holotropic Breathwork accessing some powerful personal openings. Connecting with a rooster laying an egg was a specifically strong and vivid experience. Actually I was a rooster underneath a funeral pyre, pecking the ashes of a dead chieftain. Later, driving home the road seemed to blur and disappear. It seemed as if I were driving on air. My boundaries, the car's boundaries seemed to simply disintegrate and I was left in a sitting position, speeding along. As I became cognizant of this experience the boundaries returned. I then discovered I could do this at will, allowing myself to simply release my boundaries guided me to that place again and again. At one point I felt as if I were simply floating on air, on a magical carpet, easily, effortlessly. No, I couldn't make myself do it but within the experience I seemed to be able to exercise my will and choice.

We took an exit looking for some refreshments and I ordered orange juice rather than coffee. Getting back on the highway was not diminishing in my desire for

speed. A while later we decided food was in order and pulled off at a restaurant. God knows what they thought of us as we entered mid-afternoon, feeling eyes riveting upon us. After all we had worn the same t-shirt for several days. We hadn't bathed or washed our hair in ten days. Our high top sneakers were covered in mud. We sat in a corner booth simply appreciating the wooden seat. The waitron, a young woman in her twenties I reckoned stayed a few feet away from the table asking if she could get us something to drink. My two companions were scrutinizing the menu in oblivion. A quietness had fallen over the restaurant. "Hello," I said, "Sorry about our appearance. We've been up on Mount Rogers during all those storms and this is the first real food we've had in ten days." Immediately, her face softened. The other restaurant patrons resumed their speaking. Another waitron came over and suddenly we were in a lavish conversation about the recent weather conditions. A few moments of conversation later I was being asked what I would like to eat. Having not even looked at the menu I asked, "You know what I would really like? Do you serve real mashed potatoes or are they out of a box?" They were real. "And, are you able to poach eggs?" Affirmative. "Well then, I would love to have an order of mashed potatoes, no gravy, two poached eggs, medium, biscuits, hold the butter, and some decaf coffee."

I don't even remember what the others ordered. I just remember how those mashed potatoes and poached eggs tasted as they moved around inside my mouth, slowly, gently. And how that freshly perked decaf with some milk tasted. And those biscuits! Heaven. This was simply heaven. For dessert my companions ordered ice cream with fresh fruit and offered me some. Life just could not get any better than

this. In no hurry, sitting and savoring, tasting tastes never before experienced it seemed. We took our time, eating slowly, not saying much. Cheerful farewells to the restaurant staff and we were back on the road, still in the slow lane, en route homeward. Arriving back at Bumpass we unloaded, changed cars, hugged farewell, and continued our last leg home individually.

Walking in the doorway of my home seemed strange. I had forgotten that Acer had died. He had appeared to be so real on Mt. Rogers. The house seemed strangely absent and quiet. Clothes off and into a soft, warm, bubbly bath. Soaking. The water feeling as exotic as did the food just hours earlier. Noticing how my skin felt to the touch. I must have kept adding hot water for an hour or more. Washing my hair several times before rinsing off under the tap, my scalp literally singing with vibrations. Drying off and donning fresh clean clothes completed this day of ecstasy. Sensory connections and awareness formerly taken for granted were opened like a grand lotus peeling back leaf after leaf. Never, I thought would I ever take water for granted again. Nor food. Nor soap. Nor fresh clothing. The experience was awesome and yet upon repeating here seems small and insignificant. But it wasn't small and insignificant.

I curled up on my futon and caught a nap, waking to a ringing telephone. Recognizing that noise was penetrating my system and understanding I didn't feel like connecting with anyone but staying solitary, turned the ringer off. Realizing I was moving slowly, much slower than I had been accustomed to I was able to simply let it be. Not wanting to engage in telephone chit chat or be stimulated by the radio or

television, resisting picking up my e-mail messages, I made some tea and sat outside on my back deck until darkness fell, watching the sun set. I had missed the setting sun.

Feeling these vibrations within, from head to toe as if I had been charged with electricity. Feeling fragmented as if parts of me were still on Mount Rogers. Missing them. Noticing the space they left. Wondering whether this was how particles felt before or after they connected or disconnected with other particles. Feeling space within as if I were lighter, emptier. Frightened that something was missing, perhaps something that I needed. Wondering whether I needed to know emptiness to understand fullness. Wondering whether this slowness was my naturalness and where the idea of speed came from. Driving on that highway was frightening, feeling I needed to catch-up, most real. Noticing it was only when I returned to the city that I valued the country exalting the need to experience both.

Theme Nine: Sense and Sensibilities

Taking a page from the writing of Jane Austen, my sense and sensibilities have been challenged. Common sense, that place of reasonableness based on the use of the sense, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, examined within the context of a capacity to feel, encouraged an exceptional openness to emotional impressions. Impressions as well as expressions perhaps. This unpacking is the sense of fragmentation, as if parts of me are missing, or have become hidden, as if receding. Uncertain whether the parts missing are important to the essence of me, not knowing whether I am able to simply part with pieces of myself, this experience provides an interesting set of questions not the least of which is a full examination of the fragmentation I seem to be experiencing. In particular, the sense of excitement as in particle excitement as if there are small particles of me in excitation with other particles who had not previously connected or met with each other before. An unfolding from within, molecular in nature perhaps, certainly vibrational. Wondering where attraction and repulsion may fit. Certainly there were people who, upon initial meeting I liked, and others I didn't, for no apparent reason.

The next few days came slowly. Ending my job of fifteen years just two weeks before embarking on this wilderness journey now seemed fortuitous. Appreciating the time, I wondered how my fellow travellers were managing their return, not only to city life, but also to their work environments. The last two weeks of May witnessed the beginning of my doctoral program of studies. I had returned to my home of

fifteen years, jobless. Not having to be anywhere at any particular time was advantageous. I was able to simply sit, and sip tea, whilst watching the sun rise. I could fashion my own agenda, moving not too swiftly nor too slowly. The corner Hill Cafe providing more poached eggs and mashed potatoes with a little salmon on the side. Arranging to delay my entrance into a full-time internship with Hospice for two weeks enabling me additional gestation time. A time to simply allow the flavor of the unfolding to materialize. An important time I felt.

The fragmentation, the vibrational quality which was evident within my body as intensity, was worrisome. Feeling chaotic demanded I simply be present and slow. Having a practice in meditation was most helpful. Vipassana technique allowing the breath to simply rise and fall, inhaling and exhaling steadied my jittery body. Unaccustomed to this experience of intensity, not fearful, simply wondering what its origin was.

My house had been placed on the market to be sold. A decision made prior to leaving for the wilderness. Now a buyer had arrived, making a substantial offering and suddenly I was faced with leaving this wonderful old ante bellum house in which I had lived for almost fifteen years. I have three months to find a new home and leave this one. It seemed to be rushed. I had arranged to move to Smith Mountain Lake with friends but it was not to be. An illness erupted and plans had to be changed. Now what! Other friends had recently moved to Charlotte, N.C. I e-mailed them. "Come on down," they said. Suddenly I was moving to another city in another state with a mom and dad and two young children.

I felt as if I were coming unravelled remembering watching my mother unravel a knitted garment and feeling connection. That undulation as each stitch loosened, becoming untangled resonated within. I wondered whether each of us were really born whole from the universal divine perfection. Encumbrances brought to us from hereditary and consciousness factors, being imprinted emotionally through the birthing process. Entering this place of reality through a wormhole of birth light to simply come to understand and know our selves. Find our place. Gatekeep mother earth before leaving through a death wormhole, journey continuing into unknown territory. What do we know I thought. We humans with our theories, and tinkering. This vast, incredible, universal space is way, way beyond our understanding. Who are we kidding? Suppose we were simply here to grow, ripen and die, providing mulch for the trees?

It feels deep within that experiencing these holotropic states of consciousness provides a simple technique for unpacking the suitcase and lightening the load of personal burden as well as lighting the pathway. Releasing the fragments which seem to block our ability to rise to our fullest potential by bringing beams of light to the seemingly darkened corners of our psyche, letting the sunshine in. This space then, this holotropic meadowland of sunshine, surrounded by trees and vegetation, is simply the mediating territory between mind and body. The space within which the individual can access her/his own experiences and connections with spirit. Is that why it is an individual journey? No one can do it for us?

Ethics, the science of the boundary between right and wrong touches upon and

has place in every aspect of life. Spatial relationship between right and wrong can be quite close geographically. They can occupy the same space. A white lie can become acceptable, for example. A loved one with a terminal illness should not be told her true condition, as in my mother's situation. Years' spent lobbying state and federal politicians for ethical and accountable government and campaign finance reforms left me noticing a basic incongruence from the political arena. Saying one thing, doing another, while sometimes thinking a third, seemed basically flawed. Unable or unwilling to verbalize on those differences seemed manipulative, whether intentional or not. I wanted to find a way to express a sense of fullness with words, and unlike a flattened e-mail, struggled to come alive with depth, height, and be fully rounded, almost spherical.

My internship began a couple of weeks after returning from Mount Rogers. It became an effort to get to the office and put in a full day. Returning home in the evening, writing notes, preparing dinner left little in between time or space. Usually I have great energetic expression, but since my return home I observed that my energy had shifted some. I was much more content to simply sit, be, and observe, not needing to meddle or become a part of the action. This place of not needing to become part of the action was new for me, having always been involved and participating in both work and community. This new place was comforting and disquieting simultaneously, as if there were two parts of me within. An observer and an experiencer, allowing the opportunity of choice. Is this the place where free will and choice occur? Knowing both simultaneously yet choosing one or the other,

stretching to thoughts of a pendulum with space in between the swing. It doesn't have to be one or the other but any position on the arc. Knowing the two boundaries, the edges of limitation provides space for individual free will and choice. I felt new doorways were opening, new portals of information as if I were seeing things differently. Diagrammed, it would appear as follows:



Beginning my internship was exciting. The opportunity provided seemed gracious. My talents and expertise lie in administration and organization. Well versed with juggling several balls in the air simultaneously as the director of a non-profit, it seemed the frenetic setting of hospice would be familiar territory for me. This field of Hospice care is fairly new however, and with the baby boomers approaching elder years innovative ways of accommodating end-of-life times will require creative and interdisciplinary strategies. The myriad of State and Federal rules and regulations under which hospices must operate provide consistent tension for the professional providers: Social workers, the medical community, ministers and clergy, home health care, nursing home facilities are all involved in care provision at end stages of life.

I began my internship by simply observing. Attaching myself to the differing segments and trailing professionals, writing copious notes. After a couple of weeks I ventured out with a nurse to observe home-care provision. We journeyed to a small

house on the outskirts of town. The patient was in a bedroom created from a combination of living and dining space. A bed, with mechanical ability to raise automatically, with side arms for leverage. Lots of fluffy pillows, sheets and blankets and a bedside table full with prescription bottles. He was terminal with a type of cancer. I watched from a respectful distance as blood pressure and temperature were taken. Discussions around urination and defecation regularity between nurse and caregiver occurred. Watching the nurse change his diapers and release his impaction reminded me of the days on Mount Rogers and my reactions to not having bathroom privacy at my disposal. Wondering how similar birth and death really were. Diapers for the new born and the elder. Both requiring caretaking, unable to survive on their own. Arriving and departing so similar!

Watching the hospice nurse finish I noticed a small area of white light emanating from the patients neck. Looking away, then toward him again, there it was. Faint, but visible nevertheless. I told no-one, simply wanting my inner coursing energies to complete their wanderings before making any conclusions.

The following day we visited another patient. This time the light emanating from the cortex area was more intense. Her prognosis was a few days and she was in the stage professional's call "actively dying." A new phrase, actively dying. Seemed incongruent. This patient had a rattling breath, difficult and shallow. Nevertheless she appeared peaceful and child-like. A tiny frame, all skin and bones. Not much packing here, I thought.

A young woman struggling with cancer touched everyone's soul. For some

reason when a young person, who has just begun their life is stricken with a terminal illness, a characterization of unfairness raises its head. This young woman was particularly striking. Beautiful, smart, recently married, in great physical pain. She and I became friends quickly as she asked many questions about my field of study. We talked of God often. One day I was leaving after a visit and she began speaking to me. I knew she was about to say, "If I don't see you again, good luck with your dissertation." She got as far as, "If I," when I interrupted saying, " I'll see you monday, first thing." She smiled and I walked out to my car with her sister who asked me how long I felt she had left to live as end stages were visible. Immediately I answered "monday."

I don't know where that conversation came from. It certainly was not in my conscious mind. It would not have been my way to do anything other than simply observe in this setting. After all, what were my credentials. I was just learning. Troubled by my outburst, yet seeing relief in the eyes of her sister was difficult for me. Searching for answers I wondered if I was experiencing a merging of mind and body, experiencing a new way of discernment, engaging in an empathic, instinctive, rather than cognitive response.

Going home that evening, sitting, allowing the circumstances to amplify, opened new portals for exploration. A recognition emerged that I was sad for both she, her husband and her family. Wondering more about why these things happen the way they do. Observing that often times a closeness occurs between family members as illness and death approach.

The weekend came next and I simply relaxed, took in a movie, visited with friends. Monday morning, early, I awoke with a start out of a deep sleep. There in front of me was this patient, all in white, in a cloud of white light tinged with blue, smiling. Rubbing my eyes, looking at the clock I noted it was 3am. The vision stayed for a while then, still smiling, she receded from view, slowly. Arriving at Hospice that morning I was informed she had died at 3:30am. I know, I thought. The relatives had all arrived and been with her as she drifted into a coma on Sunday evening, with a smile on her face.

I'm not too sure what to do with that experience. On some level of consciousness it is still gestating in me. Certainly it was powerful, and definitely the context seemed to come from another reality. I felt honored and grateful, pleased in fact but ungrounded with the experience which lacked context and solid foundation.

Other experiences at Hospice were equally profound. Seeing this light emanating from the cortex region and encompassing the patient's head, like a cobra of white light tinged with blue, occurred often. Sometimes the patients reached outward, with their arms extended, as if they saw friends, relatives or loved ones. Sometimes their names were called out loud. Sometimes this rattling breath simply settled into an exhale. Sometimes struggle was intent on their faces as if needing to stay here for a reason.

These openings I seemed to be experiencing were multi dimensional. Sometimes I knew what others were going to say before they said it. Sometimes I knew when they were being false as if I were in tune with my inner wisdom

consistently. In the past I would have experienced occasions of intuition, but these circumstances felt as if I were living intuition. Getting down to the bone, as if there were no excess. No layers, simply a pureness.

Our wilderness group met for a reunion one saturday. It was good re-connecting with fellow journeyers, hearing how everyone was. We were all fairly fragmented. Some said returning to work helped their focus and perhaps even channeled their vibrations into a specific direction. That made sense. I had been able to ground more when my internship began and I was required to focus. Maybe this is the boundary of impatience. The space between doing and not doing, between work and play. Or maybe they should be the same. Reminds me of euphanisms like, "Idle minds are the devil's workshop" or "all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy."

I had decided to sell all my belongings a few days prior to the appointed closing date for the sale of my house. It was now the beginning of october and, for some reason I felt a desire to give away my stuff rather than sell it. Pulling all my belongings out of the closets and drawers and setting them on the floor for invited organizations and individuals to take what they needed felt satisfying. People from a first offender program, and a local housing project came. Neighbors came also. People sorted through my stuff and took what they needed. It was such an experience. A minister walked in and looked at a vase. It belonged to my Grandmother. "Take it," I said. His face beamed and tears entered his eyes. "May I?" It was like this all day and the next day too. People filled with gratitude the likes of which I've never seen displayed before. One woman asked how I felt with strangers going through my

things. Was it invasive? No, I thought it was amazing. Stuff I considered worthless filled a stranger's hand with bounty. Unpacking my house, my life, for I had sorted and discarded years of kept souvenirs, was the most cleansing of actions. A gift given myself unknowingly.

I had not discarded this way before always keeping things on the off chance I may need them for something, or holding them because they were from family members or mementos of important events from my life. Sorting out, tearing up, re-reading old letters, class notes, birthday cards before discarding brought back forgotten memories which, when reviewed, unfolded like the pages of a book. An interesting book, remembering many events which had receded into my unconsciousness.

And so it was time to leave this house of fifteen years. Packing my small station wagon with boxes of records, a few family heirlooms, my computerware, clothing and books. Stoney, my cat sitting on top of it all, her head almost touching the top of the car. We were off. To a new place, in a new town, in a new state with a new family.

The following months of adaptation; young children, different space, settling in to writing this dissertation, allowing workshops, retreats, lectures to simply unfold rather than to intentionally search for them, was such new energy for me to experience and felt quite natural. Fully experiencing what was before me at any given moment, not planning ahead, nor analyzing what had just been, I allowed a fullness, a richness to develop. I was beginning to feel whole, contentment rising from within. A

wanting for little, except shelter, food and my computer.

Theme Ten: The Space Between

Boundaries. The space in between two objects. The space separating me from you. The home of paradox, duality and attachment. Good and evil are distinct when far apart, easy to recognize in their extremes. As boundaries come closer together, more narrow, definition becomes more illusive. Just get a dozen witnesses to share their interpretation of the corner accident for example. In that circumstance how does the truth get determined, by analyzing the facts? Facts are for this hylotropic reality. What about holotropic reality? If I can be in two places simultaneously, how much space is in between? Can I be inside my skin and outside my skin at the same time? Is this where the experience of empathy and compassion emanate from? Is this my experience of God? Being here, in my skin, and out there, in the universe, at the same time? Is this the idea of reflection? Is it linear or curved? When does attachment take form? Is death simply letting go? The questions are endless.

I had a Holotropic Breathwork session one time, during the Grof training in which I experienced my father when I was small. He came in through the door unexpectedly and my mother fainted. He came running towards me calling my name, picking me up and hugging me. All I did was fight to get away from him, this bearded stranger.

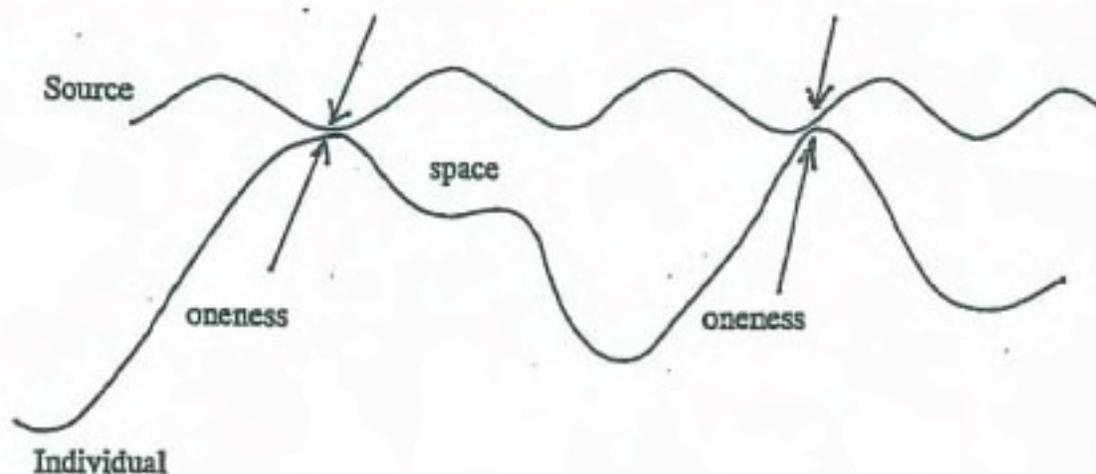
Recently, after my father was diagnosed with cancer, he came to visit. We got to talking about Grof's work and he mentioned remembering the very first time he laid eyes on me. Me too, I thought. He was in the war, lost, feared dead. Authorities

told my mother so. She was going on with her life. Finally, they found him, holed up in a hiding place and without a shave or shower simply put him on a plane, gave him two years of mail and sent him home. En route, on the plane, he opened and read his mail seeing a photograph of me for the very first time. He couldn't wait. Opening the front door my mother thought she had simply seen a ghost, for there was no warning. She fainted. From my two year old perspective he was simply an intruding bearded stranger. Dad and I reconciled over that awareness. We sobbed in each others arms and I felt the tensions leaving my body. He did too. It was most powerful.

After my father's death an Aunt divulged a family secret shared by my mother on her deathbed. He was not my biological father. Mmmm! On one level of consciousness I was grateful for the news, understanding life between me and my father had been distanced. A huge boundary had separated us even though the healing experienced during his last visit was most powerful. And I was angry, because no one had told me sooner thus reducing chances for connection with my biological father. Having always wondered why I felt a pull to this country, relief came when I discovered my biological father was an American. Feeling certain he came from this area of Virginia - North Carolina I would love to have had confirmation although deep within my soul, on some level of consciousness, I believe I do know the answer. I certainly know the land in this region with an innate intimacy.

This space between the inner me, within my skin and the outward me seem to be the very essence and reflection of Diogenes command to "know thyself." The more I am willing to journey inward toward self-knowledge, the more I am able to act with

reflection, thereby sharpening the skin of me. When inner and outer become interchangeable the available congruence reflects peace. Or maybe enlightenment or connection to the Source. It is here then that we can each experience what is biblically referred to as the "kingdom of heaven." Achieving enlightenment, or connection with the Source requires a transcendence of duality to a place of oneness. Achieved in holotropic states of consciousness brief glimpses of transcendence can occur. After all, even yogis and religious contemplatives have to eat. Pragmatically, experiencing these glimpses refreshes our outlook, confirms our wisdom and informs our mind. These glimpses, periods where the space in between is absent, provide for the experiences of oneness or the Source. Humanness then resumes and the space between gets more distant. The Source, defined as a basic, consistent emitting wave pattern as defined by quantum physicists together with humanness reflecting its attempts to be synchronized yet hindered by its blockages can be empirically mapped as follows:



Experientially, the body and mind can experience duality, paradox, opposites

or polarities simultaneously in similar fashion, with brief glimpses. Metaphorically, the meadowland or pony pasture space provided in holotropic learning offers direct connection to the Source through bilocation. Staring up into the clear blue sky towards the sun provides an unobstructed view, until the clouds arrive.

Understanding the connections and inter-connections within me to the outer expression of me permits healing to occur. A growing sense of wholeness and satisfaction erupts. What seems apparent to me on a most deep and enlightened level of consciousness is that this is a reflective quality. My relationships with other humans seem more authentic, with animals more true, with plants and flowers and trees almost life-giving the more I experience bilocation. An external intimacy of great proportion as if I am entering into the concert of life with all things. The feeling seems most natural as if I belong here. Becoming aware of excesses and waste, wanting to conserve or re-use not because I should, but because I desire to. A richness developing in allowing others to show me the way, in reciprocity, particularly with younger folk. Wanting not to separate personal time from work time, as if it should all be one time. Feeling the tensions leave as inner/outer become more interchangeable, leaves room for peace to permeate my being and I can begin to walk in the light.

Recognizing that this inner healer is a self-director, in concert with the universe in a way of totality. That I am who I am. I am where I am at this particular moment. That therefore all change comes from within. That external support is required, undirected. External impact can drive the inner more inward. External

encouragement can provide space for individual exploration. To begin with however, each individual must be willing to adventure. As soon as experiential bilocation begins, innate trust begins to grow. The more holotropic learning occurs, the more bilocation experienced. The more the inner and the outer become one, the more likely a world of peace can manifest.

I am what I am. A gatekeeper of mother earth with all the responsibilities and challenges she affords me. This archetypical mother with the ability to nurture, stretch, give and take. I am where I am. This place, this moment where my feet are planted in a meadowland of curved space, with infinite potential, limited only by my unwillingness to adventure. That is relationship, is it not? This is how we get to be our fullest human potential. This is the universal omnipotence where each one of us is an intricate part, like a universal hologram we are each unto ourselves a microcosm of the whole.

Digressing to share my experience from a few years ago when the statues in a church in Northern Virginia were "weeping." Wanting first hand information I traveled there and stayed a few days, simply sitting and watching people come and go. Many were seeking miracles, cures for their ailments, throwing their crutches away and crying prostrate on the floor before the statues of Mary and Jesus. Apart from the observation that something clearly was appearing on the statues eyes resembling tears, it was the ambiance of the church which I found to be remarkable. Everyone seemingly seeking reconciliation with God. The minister, a young man, radiant, tending to those flocking. Hundreds of people wanting their confessions heard

presented a picture difficult to describe. This was a holy place. There was an ambiance here, a feeling, a sense, as if it were hallowed. I could feel it. And, it didn't really seem to matter what the Catholic authority had to say.

A committee member asked me during the doctoral certification process how I would know my program would be completed as the design was open-ended. "I'll know," was my response, noticing a duality within speaking loudly. I continued with my research and writing, trusting the path. Last October found me in California, facilitating a workshop. This particular section focused on a circle of women storytelling. Creating the setting, I concluded by telling the story of my mother being so afraid of the advancing German armies that my Jewish heritage took a back seat, being finally told of my history when I was twenty-one, and feeling such a sense of loss. Some time later, after the conclusion of this workshop section, a woman my age was standing in front of me. She introduced herself and told me she was from Germany and her father piloted bombers dropping their deadly cargo over London during the war. We simply stared at each other. Tears fell profusely. We hugged and sat for a while just being with each other. No words were spoken. None were needed. It had been fifty-four years. Here we both were, in another country, re-connecting, revisiting those old wounds as if the universe were creating space allowing room for reconciliation to occur. I may never see her again. Have no need to really. Spirit does work in mysterious ways, presenting opportunities from least likely places, rarely as we expect. We just have to be willing to put our will aside. Now I knew why the coyote had grinned at me just a few days earlier from the desert floor. This was a

completion. Full circle, yet not returning to the origination point.

Conclusions

Profound changes have occurred within, and reflect throughout my being: Elimination of Raynaud's attacks, reduction of respiration, blood pressure, pulse rate and headache cessation had occurred; abilities developing within of a psychic nature; hands developing healing skills. But nothing more profound than the sense of newly found peace and tranquility even within the harshest of circumstances. Being pulled or pushed against my will I relent in favor of acceptance. Recognition of boundaries within provide space for attachments to loosen. An understanding arises that there is only one Truth, only one Way, only one Source. No, this is not religious revelation. It comes unresistably from the magic and mystery inherent in direct experience. In particular, from the direct experience of the mystery of bilocation which reorganizes my internal frame of reference.

The Language of Holotropic Light: Unpacking the Experience therefore becomes a change-guide to self understanding. The beginning themes reflect the past; describing the stuffing brought to this moment; the central themes explicate the preparation, experience and integration process encompassed by the contemporary rite of passage; and the concluding themes describe experiential unpacking with summary conclusions. Within each segment avenues of interest were explored before returning to the original theme such as my recurring experience of being skinned alive.

Entering direct experience by this methodology requires the experiencer be aware of potential consequences. A safe setting is required within which to enter

direct experience. Any hesitations in the provided setting restrict the experiencers fullness of experience. Any worthy facilitator will provide a complete theoretical framework, time to answer questions, and referrals, to assist a willing stranger be their most comfortable prior to a holotropic learning session.

Mathematical metaphor incorporating the straight line and the circle connect well within this cartography of consciousness. The straight line, as metaphor for male energy can be represented spear-like utilizing a thrusting energy. A straight line, which in nature is aggressive, is the shortest distance between two points. Running on a single track with forward motion, directional, with intention as if seeking a goal, extends the metaphor into an archetypical description of male energy. The circle, a metaphor for female energy, is a roundedness, a full-bellied sphere. As in gestation it exemplifies a sitting, a being with or not doing, as if holding the space for a birth to occur. To connect or bring together these two mathematical metaphors, these male and female archetypes can be configured as follows:



On the outside the straight line appears about to penetrate, as a sperm would an egg. At the other end of the interpenetration, on the inside, the straight line is contained within the circle. Experiencing both archetypes of male and female simultaneously bring individual free will and choice to the position of sitting and

gestating, the position of maternal action of movement forward. These situations of simultaneity instantly reveal any decision making process as energetic whether for individual, or community.

Each time I integrate consciousness I reveal my truth and the fragmented part of me has an opportunity to heal and integrate as it is welcomed into my being like a lost relative. As this process moves forward my energy increases, so does the clarity of my passion, and I am able to step forward with more difficult truths, into more difficult circumstances. Reminding me of a moment of realization:

"Dance as though no one is watching you,
Love as though you've never been hurt before,
Sing as though no one can hear you and
Live as though "heaven" is on earth."

Each individual must seek on their own volition their place of highest potential. Finding this place of personal volition becomes possible when willingness to seek our Source occurs. Experiential duality and paradox are possible within the bilocation phenomenon. Holotropic learning provides opportunities for experiential bilocation to occur. The direct experience of peace and violence anchors and stretches the extremes. Free will and choice permits each individual to designate their place between the extremes.

We humans clearly search each other for clues and answers, but it is the ontological reconciliation between each individual and the universal omnipotent Source which is the imperative. Through experiential bilocation and subsequent integration space is provided for each of us to exercise free-will and choice, the fundamentals of ontological reconciliation. Recognizing where our shadows lurk, and

integrating them becomes the gateway to conscious freedom. Holotropic learning provides the setting within which we can experience bilocation directly.

Biblical text informs us that spirit or soul enters life at conception and is the surviving force which continues after death. In our attempts to understand this phenomena, theories, concepts, models, and methodologies have been created. Elimination of enigmatic mystery seems at best fruitless and at worst impossible. The drive to understand is in direct opposition to the patience of simple acceptance. Acceptance of natural laws offers space for gratitude to exist. The drive to know establishes criteria for incessant tinkering. Here lies the root of potential evil. The greater human scientific accomplishment becomes, the more there is to understand. We smash the atom only to discover the existence of much smaller particles. William Penfield, the acknowledged father of neurosurgery simply says, "science has no answers."

We civilized humans seem to need to bump up against something to know where we are, or identifying ourselves with outer things like jobs, skills, people and other attachments. Holotropic learning provides opportunities to know the opposites, the paradox, the duality of natural process allowing the inner and the outer to connect in context. Once known, individual will and free choice permit personal decision-making and consequential responsibility. Knowing when to sit and gestate, utilizing the female archetype and when to act, move with swiftness, spear-like utilizing the male archetype provides clarity of purpose at any given moment. We then can stand as whole individuals, collectively able to perform divine will, whilst remaining

autonomous and independent.

Complicated theories reserved for academia separating the educated from the uneducated like merit badges, replaces the very essence of learning with rigid methods. Our society operates out of context, fragmented through continual bifurcations consequently missing the whole picture. No need to be.

Summary

Research Hypotheses:

- 1 - How feasible is completion of the proposed contemporary rite of passage, and
- 2 - What are the ramifications, consequences and social relevance of eliciting the bilocation experience through a contemporary rite of passage.

Research Conclusions:

- 1 - In as much as completion can be constrained within a framework of time and space, the author completed the eighteen month contemporary rite of passage although avenues of opening and awareness are intertwining within both newly opened and previously discovered portals.
- 2 - Areas of ramifications, consequences and social relevance to be explicated will be categorized in terms of personal self-awareness then extended to conceptual sensibilities and logic.

Qualitative observations and analyses of self-awareness are as follows:

The more I look within, the more I connect with the outside.

The more I let go, give away, the more I appreciate what surrounds me.

The more I surrender to universal omnipotence (Source), the easier life becomes..

The more I let myself bilocate (fragment) the clearer, wiser, more connected with my surroundings I become.

The more I experience my anger internally, the less I am wanting to destroy externally.

The more I can experience holotropic states of consciousness, the more I can discard, let go of unwanted attachments.

I am a witness to my own experiences.

Paradox, duality can be experienced simultaneously.

Truth-telling and near-death are synonymous.

Truth resonates within. It is vibrational.

Hylotropically, I can't think and listen at the same time

My free-will and choice are determined only by pendulous separation.

Experiencing me and you simultaneously opens my doorway to compassion and empathy.

If I care for me, then I care for you.

If I am satisfied within, then I am able to be present without.

If I know me, then I can know you and

If I raise my hand to strike you, I strike me.

So, who am I? - A skin encapsulated suitcase of stuff.
What am I? - A skin encapsulated suitcase of stuff.
Where am I? - Everywhere.

And, if I can gain knowledge and learn in this holotropic way, others can too.
Replacing the word "we" where "I" is in the above listing and re-reading will provide a meadowland of possibility.

Conceptual Sensibilities and Logic

My experience of bilocation began with an experience of near-death. Being on the operating table, and on the ceiling watching myself on the operating table, simultaneously. During Holotropic Breathwork sessions there were many instances when I experienced being on the floor, in a workshop setting, and in another location, in another land, or ancient century at the same time. On several occasions I left the observer setting and seemed to literally become the experience. Occasionally I have experienced this merging of observer and experiencer beyond the workshop setting; driving along a highway or watching a movie. Experiential bilocation continued during the solitude portion of the contemporary rite of passage. Future comparison of the near-death, Holotropic Breathwork, and wilderness quest identifying similarities and differences would provide a unique reservoir of data.

Raynaud's attacks ceased after my first Holotropic Breathwork session. Respiration has reduced greatly in the form of lower blood pressure and reduced pulse rate. Headaches have disappeared as well. I am able to see light around people. Full spectrum light in addition to the near-death light. Clairvoyance is increasing as I seem to know when my telephone will ring or when my aunt needs to speak with me. I

seem to be able to connect with certain animals at differing times, trees and flowers and vegetables also, as if we enjoy some unspoken language. Continued analysis of my emerging psychic abilities and intuitive understandings, using heuristic methodology, may provide additional data supporting the usefulness of holotropic learning.

I'm not an academic, neither am I a physicist. I am dyslexic and seem to see things differently from most other people. I see in pictures, am fascinated by shapes and colors and jigsaw puzzles. Coming from my perspective all I can offer you, the reader, are my sensibilities. Academic thinking is narrow and focused. Dyslexic thinking is full and spatial. My dyslexic internal operational circuitry is naturally different from most others. Discovering new ways of learning may have future ramifications for childhood education and corporate decision making. An introduction of consciousness into all methodologies provides opportunities for wholistic context to be established.

Connecting with my Source of inspiration is important for my existence during this lifetime. It seems to make perfect sense that I came here to this world, with all of my history, both consciously and hereditarily, through the birthing cartography becoming emotionally imprinted, experiencing a near-death as I am catapulted into this world to struggle with the tensions of my inner and outer being, seeking ways to become congruent, only to leave this world to continue my journey relinquishing this skin and returning to my essence.

But I need to know myself. I need to know when to sit and when to act. I need

to know that ethically, from within myself, not needing to hear others tell me what or how externally. I need to have a safe space. I need to be willing to seek and trust that all will be as it should be. I need to know not to waste.

There are ways to do things. Right ways. Not self-serving but community serving. If we enter into things with no personal agenda, create a safe space, a place for the before, the conception, gestation, birth, the journey and death . . . is it this simple? Maybe? Ancient cultures used to light fires in the evening. They would cook and sing and dance in honor of their Creator. How far have we come from this place?

We arrived here through a near-death, bilocated, knowing this place of Source innately. Maybe this knowingness initiates our drive toward wholeness. This place of birth is potent. We knew about stuff coming in, invading our territory, and about our explosive reactionary powers. We knew how to hold on or to let go, somatically. We knew about tension on the inside, wanting to scream to the outside. And, our ability to trust ourselves on the inside called into question when abuse is present providing hesitation on the outside. Holotropic learning brings focus to the inside. Futures studies of the healing potential from holotropic learning will offer additional data for abuse recovery. Discovering my wounded self through being skinned alive during several holotropic learning sessions promoted a softness within. My previous defense mechanism of a hard outer shell softening, and becoming more pliable, resulting in more genuine relationships. Personal external realizations clear when criticisms are absented in favor of compassion and empathy.

Implications for Future Research

Accessing bilocation as offered through holotropic learning provide

experiential ways of knowing duality and paradox. Knowing both places, the extremes or opposites provide avenues of free-will and choice to be made as if a pendulum were in flow. The more we know, the more we can make informed decisions of where we want to be. Exploring our darkness is as important as exploring our lightness. Welcoming in or letting go. Relinquishing attachments. Coming full circle, not quite returning to the origination point.

The consequences of intentional contemplative practices may provide a future study of interest. To begin the creative journey denotes a willingness requiring humility, the antithesis of intention. Meditation and prayer cites practitioners seeking transcendence. The very act of seeking is desirous and when measured against a relinquishment or surrender, willingness reflects a required modesty.

This self-centered learning modality, accessing differing ways to experience holotropic states of consciousness, using heuristic in-depth analysis is essential to our existence individually, collectively, cosmically.

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