

Learning Feelings: Foundations of Contemplative Education

by

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the requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy**

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to the pioneers of contemplative education, students and educators in formal and non-formal settings and the sages and teachers who have influenced their work.

ABSTRACT

The proposed ineffability of subjective experience has meant that it is frequently absent in educational discourse, where the emphasis is on objective and rational acquisition of knowledge. This prevailing conception of knowledge leaves the pre-predicative foundations of learning neglected, which this thesis challenges by foregrounding the subjective contemplative experience of its ‘co-researchers’ (i.e. ‘participants’). In doing this, it reveals a subjective interrelational realm, intersecting and being intersected by the objective that grounds learning through contemplation.

This project, sited in the holistic approach of contemplative education, critically examines the co-researchers’ experience of this realm. Its interdisciplinary phenomenological approach and methods provided access to the co-researchers’ contemplative interior experience. The rich data resulting from these methods revealed their development of *feeling languages* and *maps*, which they used to navigate their inner landscapes. Recognising the importance of these metaphorical *languages* led to the central findings of this thesis. Despite the co-researchers’ struggle at times to define their contemplative experience, what they reported is suggestive of a *contemplative synaesthesia*, or their experience of gestalts of affective, somatic, cognitive and transcendent modes of being. I have termed the process that I believe underpins these gestalts, the *feeling nexus*. Further I suggest that the *feeling nexus* resides in an elemental ground-of-being, and that contemplative engagement with both provides a sense of integration that founds the positive outcomes of contemplative education.

This project’s exploration of the *feeling nexus* starts with a phenomenological and Yogic examination of an interrelational or ecological body, made permeable by the interspersed contexts. Its interrelational nature provides access to the *feeling nexus*, while contemplative experience of it frequently initiates a trajectory through contemplation where new meaning arises through pre-predictive, somatic and cognitive phases of meaning making. This study’s translation of the co-researchers’ experience in each of these stages is a unique approach that traces their creation of new meaning through contemplation. It offers a schema of learning through *feelings* for contemplative pedagogy, and a conception of subjective contemplative experience that contributes to an ontology of consciousness, which is currently missing from contemplative education theory.

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RELEVANT PUBLICATIONS, CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS AND WORKSHOPS ARISING FROM THE WRITING OF THIS THESIS

Publications:

- Morgan, P. & Vines, P. (2013). Invited proposal, contemplative practices as tools for resilience and enhanced legal skills. In P. Maharg (Ed.), *Law Student Wellbeing* (pp. 26-52), Gower, Vermont, USA.
- Morgan, P. (2012). The *feeling nexus*: An internal mechanism of change in educational philosophy, *Occasional Papers, Auckland University of Technology: Wisdom Traditions and Universities*, 5, 3-14.
- Morgan, P. (2012). Following contemplative education students' transformation through their 'ground-of-being' experiences, *Journal of Transformative Education*, 10(1), 42-60.

Conference Presentations:

- 2011 Morgan, P., "Actuating change through contemplation", Paper presented at the *Contemplative Campus*, Amherst College, Massachusetts, USA, 11th November.
- 2011 Morgan, P., "The *Feeling Nexus*: An internal mechanism of change in educational philosophy", Paper presented at *Driving the Future of History and Philosophy*, the UNSW Postgraduate History and Philosophy Conference, Sydney, Australia, 8th September.
- 2009 Morgan, P., "The role of contemplative experience in transformative environmental education", Paper presented at the *8th International Transformative Learning Conference*, Bermuda, 18th – 20th, November.

Invited Presentations/Lectures:

- "Somatic Knowing: The Body Entwined in Learning", Gender and Cultural Studies Research Seminar, School of Gender and Cultural Studies, the University of Sydney (UWS), Sydney, Australia. 18th April, 2013

“Contemplative Pedagogies: Evoking Presence in Higher Education”, (Co-presented with Nico Roenpagel), *Connections Seminar Series*, Learning and Teaching Unit, UNSW, Sydney, Australia. 22nd May, 2012

“Mindfulness as a Tool to Support Resilience: An Introduction to Contemplative Education”, *Students Minds at UNSW*, Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS), UNSW, Sydney, Australia. 8th August, 2013

Lecture: “Developing Resilience in Law School” (Co-presented with Dr Prue Vines), Faculty of Law, UNSW, Sydney, Australia. 18th and 19th March 2013

Symposium: “The Resilient Law Student: Theory and Practice”, Faculty of Law, UNSW, Sydney, Australia

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NOTES ON THE TEXT

Pseudonyms and the term ‘co-researchers’

The names of the co-researchers in this study have been changed to first name pseudonyms for confidentiality.

The term co-researcher(s) is used exclusively throughout this project to mean ‘participant(s)’, or ‘interviewee(s)’. The methods chapter provides a more detailed explanation, though in brief co-researcher(s) is used, following Clark Moustakas (1994) in his *Phenomenological Research Methods* to indicate the reciprocal relationship between researcher and participant that occurs in the form of the phenomenological research used in this project.

The Sanskrit

The conventions used for diacritical marks and the spelling of the Sanskrit in this thesis are outlined below.

As the Sanskrit alphabet has more letters than the English alphabet, these extra letters are represented in English by combining roman letters with ‘diacritical marks’. For example: *ś*, *ṣ* and *s* all represent different letters of the Sanskrit alphabet and the meaning of a word changes with the use of a different letter. Sanskrit vowels also need to be designated as long or short. Again the meaning changes, sometimes radically. A horizontal line over a roman letter indicates a long vowel. For example: *śāstra* means a weapon; *śāstra* means a sacred text. Several Sanskrit words are now commonly used in English without diacritical marks. Some, such as *yoga*, *guru* and *mantra*, don’t need diacritical marks. *Samadhi*, should be written as *samādhi*, but has come to be known with both spellings. For the purpose of this thesis the correct Sanskrit spelling is used, unless the word is a proper name (Dr Jennifer Cover,¹ May, 2012).

¹ The Sanskrit and Yoga scholar Dr Jennifer Cover supervised the use of Yoga philosophy and Sanskrit in this thesis.

Video Illustration

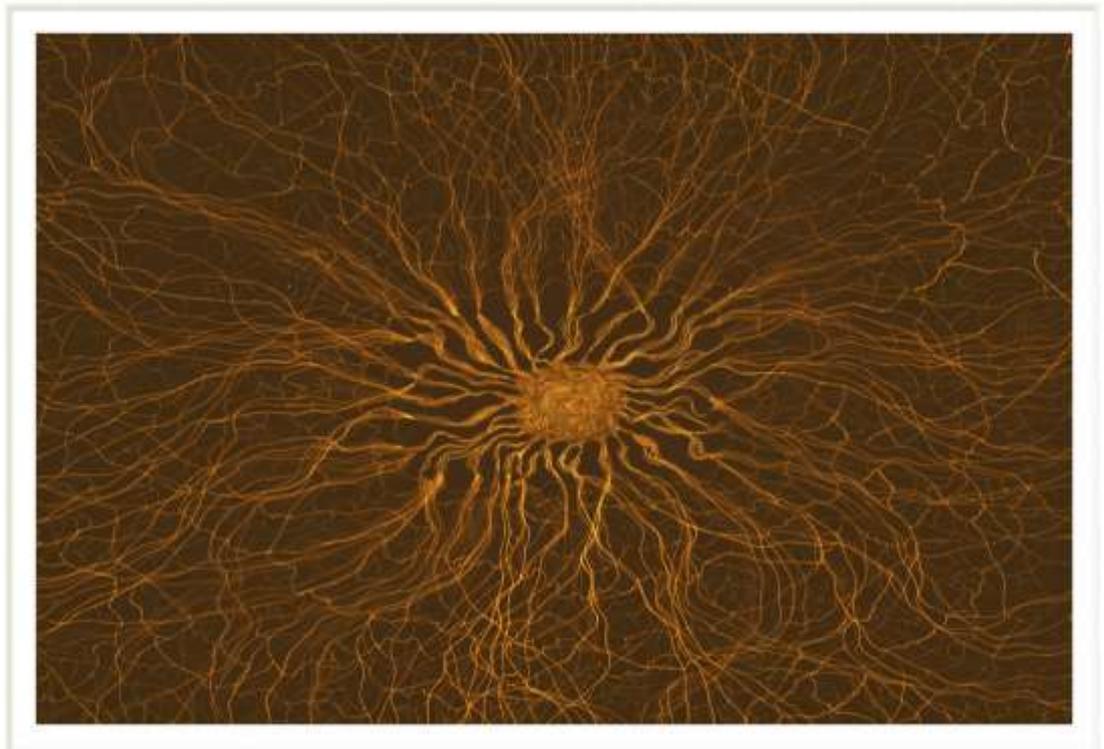
This project is accompanied by a video illustration (21 minutes) located at the back of the thesis, or if you are viewing an electronic copy you can find it at: https://www.youtube.com/edit?action_reinstate=1. The video is divided into three parts, starting with a visualisation of the *feeling nexus*,² which provides the viewer with an impression of this prefigurative process. This is followed by a section from each of the two stages of the fieldwork – the environmental art retreat *Beyond the Doors*, in the North Island of New Zealand and a yoga class at Loyola Marymount University (LMU), Los Angeles, CA, USA. Accompanying the video are sections of interviews from each fieldwork site, which illustrate the central findings of this project. In the section following the visualisation of the *feeling nexus* the co-researcher's story underlying the images of the *Beyond the Doors* retreat outlines the three stages of the *learning feelings*³ process. In the last section the interview accompanying the images from a yoga class at LMU, highlights aspects of the *contemplative trajectory*⁴ and the importance of somatic focus for learning through contemplation. The video has been included to provide a visual/aural encounter with the fieldwork, as another means for the reader to experience the richness of the data that arose from the fieldwork. Please note that this video was filmed and edited by the author on non-professional equipment.

² The *feeling nexus*, which is a hypothetical pre-predicative process of transformation and learning and the primary finding of this project, is detailed throughout this study.

³ *Learning feelings*, a three-stage process of learning through contemplation, is a central finding of this project, which is outlined in detail in Chapters Six to Eight.

⁴ The contemplative trajectory is a five-part schema developed in this project to illustrate the co-researchers' passage through contemplation, it is expounded in Chapters Three to Five.

Introduction, *Learning Feelings: Foundations of Contemplative Education*



Cameron Beau Wylie Foster, 2013

The extensive benefits attributed to contemplation⁵ belie its seemingly passive nature. Sitting still, introverting the senses and letting thoughts pass through awareness, may not appear a likely activity to support learning. Nevertheless, the balanced and highly focused states that it can generate have initiated its widespread integration into a range of educational settings from kindergartens to colleges (university). The latter is the site of this project, which critically examines the foundation of learning through contemplation in the stories of 86 contemplative education students and academics across sites of higher and adult education in the USA, Australia and New Zealand. This interdisciplinary project looks beyond much of the theoretical focus in contemplative education, which frequently hinges on psychological, neuroscience⁶ and pedagogical research⁷ to examine the phenomenology of this project's co-researchers' subjective contemplative experience.

The project follows their passage through contemplation to answer the questions that frame this study: Is there an elemental mechanism actuating learning through contemplation? If so what is it, and how does it work? The focus in this project on the co-researchers' experience of a gestalt of modes of being or *contemplative synaesthesia* helps answer these questions. Reflecting on this engagement with a force that integrates different modes of human experience initiated my creation of a hypothetical mechanism of change that I have titled the *feeling nexus*. The absence of relevant contemplative education theory necessitated development of this mechanism, which is an integrating force continuously working to draw together somatic, affective, cognitive and transcendent modes of being. My proposition that this elemental process and its

⁵ There are two reasons that I have used the term 'contemplation' throughout this project. Firstly, because the continuum of secular experience contained in the varied understandings of the term, from deep secular reflective thought to religious forms of prayer and meditation, is illustrative of this project's co-researchers' meditative and reflective experiences and practices. The breadth of these practices is outlined in the Centre for Contemplative Mind in Society's (CCMIS's) 'Tree of Contemplative Practices', that describes seven types of contemplative practice, the generative, ritual/cyclical, stillness, movement, creative relational and activist (CCMIS, <http://www.contemplativemind.org/practices/tree>). Secondly, contemplation is used because the site of this study is Contemplative Education.

⁶ Findings from neuroscience, neurophenomenological and associated sciences researching meditation are used in this project, though they are not a central focus. Rather they are used to provide a physiological illustration of the interrelational processes of the *feeling nexus* and the ground it resides in.

⁷ Examples of researchers in psychology/psychotherapy are: Benson et al. 2004; Epstein 1995; Goleman 2003(a), (b); Segal et al. 2002; Kabat-Zinn 2005; Lerner 1994; Ornish 1998; Moyers 1993. Examples in pedagogy are: Burggraf & Grossenbacher 2007; Bush 2006, 2010, 2011; Gunnlaugson 2009(a), (b), 2010, 2011; Hart 2004, 2008; Kasl & Elias 1997, 2000; Miller 1994, 2010; Repetti 2010; Sarath 2003, 2006; Zajonc 2008, 2010. Examples in neuroscience are: Braboszcz et al. 2009; Deshmukh 2006; Lutz et al. 2002, 2004, 2007(a), (b), 2008; Kerr 2012, 2011(a), (b).

interrelational substrate underpin learning through contemplation is expanded throughout this project.

The significance of the study

This project's claim of an inherent interrelational process actuating learning through contemplation is grounded in the understanding that experience of the contemplative interior is not ineffable. This is contrary to much mainstream education theory, which avoids subjective experience possibly because of its proposed ineffability and the assumption of its presence. As a result, the absence of methods congruent with the subjective contemplative state required me to develop the phenomenological methodology used in this study. It enabled me to gather and translate reports from pre-figurative and somatic experience which I believe ground cognitive stages of meaning making in education.

The highly textured data produced by this method is used to detail significant aspects of the co-researchers' contemplative experience. However, the absence of relevant theory necessitated my creation of a range of unique concepts to describe what was revealed by the method. This starts with the understanding of the interrelational processes of the *feeling nexus* and the *contemplative synaesthesia* or *feeling*⁸ of them. Next is the schema of *learning feelings*, which is examined throughout the stages of a *contemplative trajectory*. The analysis of these stages highlights features of the co-researchers' pre-predicative⁹ and somatic meaning making, which are often the states and processes judged ineffable. However, I suggest that the co-researchers' idiosyncratic *feeling languages* and *maps*, which enabled them to navigate and understand their contemplative interiors, can be translated.

⁸ The word '*feeling(s)*' in italics is used throughout this study to describe a state coloured by affect but something more than emotion. It indicates a resonance of being (Heron 1992) or a gestalt of different modes of human experience.

⁹ I am using the term 'pre-predicative' to title subjective experience, drawing from Dermot Moran's (2002) development of a state of consciousness prior to rational thought or the use of language, which Merleau-Ponty calls 'the experience of rationality' (Merleau-Ponty in Moran 2002, p. 419). Moran defines this as "the manner in which thought and conceptual ability arise out of a more primordial, less articulated form of experience...following Husserl's 'pre-predicative life of consciousness'" (ibid.). Further, "Our bodily intentions already lead us into a world constituted for us before we conceptually encounter it in cognition" (p. 402).

My development of a *schema of feelings* is important in this project's critique of the politics of subjectivity often present in mainstream education (Wright 2000). This is because it acknowledges the presence and significance of pre-predicative and embodied aspects of learning in contemplation. It also provides a means to translate these aspects of contemplation to support the development of an ontology of consciousness currently missing in contemplative education theory. This study not only offers a congruent method with which to examine contemplative consciousness¹⁰ in education, but suggests ways to develop educational environments that are supportive of contemplation. In addition, it furnishes a schema of *learning through feelings* to inform the development of robust contemplative education pedagogy.

Themes and orientation

In its investigation of the integrating force of the *feeling nexus* this project examines the subjective experience of contemplation. It defines and examines an ecological body, contemplative consciousness, permeable modes of being, a *contemplative trajectory*, the *learning feelings* process and pedagogical methods congruent with contemplation. Each of these aspects is oriented by the project's interdisciplinarity, its understanding of ecology and the politics of subjectivity.¹¹ They are not its central focus but situate it within interdisciplinary philosophical inquiry into the nature of contemplation in learning.¹² This project's interdisciplinarity is framed by its correlation of classical

¹⁰ This project develops a specific understanding of contemplative consciousness, which is different from the everyday state of consciousness tied to sensory perception and known through objects of consciousness. In essence contemplative consciousness, as it is understood in this study, is the deeply focused and mindful state of consciousness that arises through contemplative practices, which can then lead to an awareness of the 'process' of consciousness. This understanding of contemplative consciousness is described in detail in Chapter Two.

¹¹ I am referencing: B.A. Wallace 2004. *The taboo of subjectivity: Toward a new science of consciousness*, Oxford, Oxford University Press. In a similar vein David Kidner (2001) in his *Nature and Psyche: Radical environmentalism and the politics of subjectivity* critiques a history of subjectivity starting with the enlightenment, which has created a "historically fabricated opposition between self and world on which industrialism relies" (p. 8) in his proposition of an 'ecological subjectivity' (Also see: Flax 1993; Hollway et al. 2004; Nussbaum 1998; Smith & Watson 1998).

¹² Theorists working in this area are: Bai 2001; Dirx 1997; Eppert 2008; Fasching 2008; Ferrer 2002; Lutz & Thompson 2003; Morley 2001, 2008; Ng 2000, 2008; Roth 2008; Thompson 2006; Vokey 1999, 2003, 2009; Zajonc 2006(a), 2006(b), 2008.

Yoga¹³ philosophy and phenomenology, which were chosen because they are grounded in subjective or first-person experience. However, this is not an exegesis of those philosophies, rather I use the tools of phenomenology and Yoga to analyse contemplative experience. Although I engage the work of Yoga scholars such as Georg Feuerstein, Christopher Chapple and Ian Whicher, and the phenomenologist's Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, this is not a critical analysis of their phenomenological or Yogic research. Rather I draw on specific concepts from their work to analyse contemplative experience.

The terms 'interrelationality' and 'ecology' are used in this study to mean an inter-dimensional, systemic interweaving of all levels of reality. The primary example of this is the ecological force of the *feeling nexus* and its elemental substrate. The understanding of a pervasive ecology is mirrored in the project's conception of contemplation as the process of consciousness, which through its dynamic nature can permeate the ecologies of the contemplative practitioner and their contexts.

The 'politics of subjectivity' titles a position that critiques the marginalisation of subjective contemplative practice and states of consciousness in mainstream education, which the pedagogue Gillian Ruch (2010) describes as objectivity being "privileged over subjectivity, 'hard' facts and reason over 'soft', experiential, intuitive knowledge" (p.202). Although this politics isn't the primary focus of this project, it impacted all its stages and the academic experiences of many of the co-researchers. In particular a number of the academics I spoke to in the fieldwork cautioned against framing any research in terms of an investigation of meditation or spiritual practice. As an educational theorist warned in an email exchange: "It is advisable to be aware that any research which ties in Eastern traditions gets labelled New Age, and that is why few educational researchers seem to take it up" (Email interview, 20th March, 2011).

¹³ Yoga with a capital 'Y' is used in this project to indicate classical Yoga philosophy, whereas yoga with a lower case 'y' indicates the practices of yoga. These practices are understood here to be contemplative psychosomatic practices that include *āsanas* (the postures), *prāṇāyāma* (breathing exercises) and *dhyāna* (meditation). Understandings of the origins and teachings of Yoga philosophy, which is one of eight schools of Hindu philosophy (*Sāṃkhya*, *Yoga*, *Nyāya*, *Vaiśeṣika*, *Mīmāṃsā*, *Vedānta*, *Śaiva*, *Tantra*), are widely contested, however in this project Yoga is primarily described through the work of the Yoga scholars Georg Feuerstein 1974 (a), (b), 1989(a) (b), 1990, 1996, 1998, 2007 (a), (b), (c), 2008); Ian Whicher 1998 (a) (b), 2000; Whicher & Carpenter 2000 (a), (b), and Christopher Chapple 1998, 2000, 2001, 2006, 2008; Chapple & Tucker, 2000.

Locating the study

This project is situated in the current re-emergence of contemplative education, which is a form of humanistic education that integrates first-person contemplative knowing with the sensory and rational. It is defined by the educational psychologists Robert Roeser and Stephen Peck (2009) as a “set of experiential learning opportunities designed to help students develop clear, calm, and concentrated states of awareness in a context of personal growth and values”¹⁴ (p. 127). Contemplative education, which is affiliated with integral and transformative education, is part of a pedagogical move to engage the whole student in education. This holistic school understands that being and knowing, ontology and epistemology, are interdependent. It counters the decontextualisation of knowledge construction and the overemphasis on narrow conceptions of the intellect. Holistic approaches in education challenge representationalist models that dominate mainstream education (Dall’Alba & Barnacle 2007, p. 682). They also counter increasing pressure to instrumentalise education and understand that pedagogy is more than:

merely pouring knowledge into the unprepared soul [or mind] as if it were some container held out empty and waiting. On the contrary real education lays hold of the soul itself and transforms it in its entirety by first of all leading us to the place of our essential being and accustoming us to it. (Heidegger 1998, p. 167)

Phenomenology is particularly important in this approach to education because of its critique of the representationalist privileging of mind and reason over body and world (Dall’Alba & Barnacle 2007). Its emphasis on the embodied knowing that can arise from being-in-the-world frames this project’s phenomenological orientation. This ranges from the phenomenological methods developed in dialogue with Moustakas’s (1994) and van Manen’s (1990) transposition of phenomenology to qualitative research, to the phenomenological theory used to describe its central propositions. Specifically it draws from Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s (1945/1962, 1968), work on embodiment and perception; Martin Heidegger’s (1927/1962, 1998, 1935/2000) understandings of being, embodiment and learning; and Edmund Husserl’s protean conception of affectivity (as defined by Elizabeth Behnke 2008) and the pre-predicative. These primary texts are

¹⁴ Other aspects of this definition are outlined in Chapter Eight.

supported by education and phenomenology scholarship such as Robin Barnacle (2009) and Gloria Dall’Alba’s work on embodied knowing (2009(a), (b), (c)) as well as their joint work (2005, 2007). This interdisciplinary and phenomenological theory is used to critique educational approaches that privilege the cognitive, to advance the *feeling nexus* hypothesis and to introduce pedagogy congruent with contemplation.

The thesis of interrelationality that grounds the central claims of this project is supported by interdisciplinary approaches that engage phenomenology. In particular the intersection of movement arts and phenomenology; phenomenology and place in anthropology; phenomenology and consciousness studies; phenomenology and neuroscience; neurophenomenology and associated sciences; and phenomenology and Yoga. Each of these methods is employed in this project’s development of an ecological or permeable body, though the correlation of phenomenology and Yoga was particularly useful. It is currently being developed in interdisciplinary Yoga scholarship, particularly in areas that study embodied practice. Theorists include Joseph Alter (2004, 2006) on Yoga and ‘sensual embodiment’; Sondra Fraleigh (2000) on dance and somatically conceived yoga; J. Lowell Lewis (1995) on the ethnography of human movement; and Benjamin Smith (2007) on the phenomenology of bodily practice in yoga.

I was introduced to the theoretical correlation of phenomenology and Yoga through the work of the psychologist, phenomenologist and Yoga scholar Dr James Morley (2001, 2008). His presentation of their complementary ontologies of first-person experience initiated my translation of the co-researchers’ subjective, contemplative experience. Morley’s approach was supported by the anthropologist Asha Persson’s (2007, 2010) ethnographies of the Satyananda Yoga community in Australia. While separate, Yogic¹⁵ Feuerstein (1989(a), (b), 1990, 1996, 1998, 2007(a), 2008) and Whicher (1998(a), (b), 2000), and phenomenological scholarship Behnke (2008 (a), (b)), Heidegger (1927/1962, 1998), Husserl (1900/1973, 1931/1960, 1931/1973), Levin (1999), Merleau-Ponty (1945/1962, 1964, 1968) are brought into dialogue throughout the study.

¹⁵ Yoga philosophy was also chosen as it is a substantial philosophy investigating perception, consciousness and embodied practice, and because it is founded on 8000 years of empirical and theoretical research (Feuerstein 2008).

The phenomenological investigation of embodiment and consciousness has also been influential in this project, particularly the work of Csordas (1994(a), (b), 1997, 2002); Fasching (2008); Gallagher (2005); Levin (1999); Salamon (2006); and Welton (1999(a), (b)). Likewise, I have drawn on neurophenomenological research into consciousness and meditation, which combines phenomenology and contemplative practices with neuroscience, and is detailed in the work of Varela and Shear (1999(a), (b)); Varela and Thompson (2001); Varela (1996, 1999 (a), (b), 2006); Varela, Thompson and Rosch (1993) and others. I draw from this and related scholarship on the phenomenological and Yogic understanding of elemental ecological forces and forms to negotiate and understand the workings of the *feeling nexus*. That focus, in this project, differentiates it from the work of the interdisciplinary theorists noted above. Many of them use phenomenology to investigate physiological and psychological phenomenon ranging from somatic awareness in dance pedagogy to the impacts of contemplation on the physiology of the brain.

This investigation of learning through contemplation also draws from contemplative, transformative and integral education theory that does not engage phenomenology or Yoga. This research supports the project's focus on bodily knowing and its suggestions for somatic contemplative pedagogy. Specifically it draws from second-wave transformative education theory to develop the concept of perspective transformation that occurs across pre-figurative, embodied and cognitive stages. This includes John Dirx's (1997) work on 'soul learning' and affect, and Kasl and Yorks's (2002(a), (b), 2006)) 'whole person learning' in transformative education, plus the integral approaches of scholars like Esbjörn-Hargens (2006, 2007, 2010), Ferrer (2002), Ferrer et al. (2005) and Gunnlaugson (2007(a), (b), 2009(a), (b), 2010, 2011). This study's critique of the place of contemplative states of consciousness in education also looks to the work of Hart (2004, 2008), Miller (1994, 2010), Palmer et al. (2010), Repetti (2010) and Zajonc (2008(a), (b), (c), 2008(a), 2010) who investigate psychological and neuroscience propositions for the positive outcomes of contemplation. However, none barring Ferrer, in his revision of transpersonal theory, focus on the primordial foundations of learning through contemplation.

The consolidation of this diverse literature was needed in this study to support the project's central aim to discover and identify the foundations of learning through

contemplation. As there is no single area that provides the theoretical tools to enter, examine and retrieve the necessary information from the contemplative interior this interdisciplinary approach was necessary. My development of this method, the phenomenological methodology and the innovative *feeling schema* translates the pre-predicative and somatic basis of learning that can occur in contemplation. It counters the politics of subjectivity which has kept this internal space mute in much educational research,¹⁶ and is an original and timely contribution to contemplative education theory and practice.

Organisation of the thesis

This thesis is introduced by its methods chapter, which is then followed by seven chapters divided across two sections. The first section contains Chapters Two to Five, which outline five stages of a *contemplative trajectory* frequently experienced by the co-researchers. Chapter Two introduces this section, starting with its definition of an ecological body revealed through contemplation. It outlines how contemplative experience of the interrelationality of this body is needed to *feel* processes of the interior such as the *feeling nexus*. Findings in this chapter support the investigation of the *contemplative trajectory* in Chapters Three to Five. Each of these chapters critically examines the co-researchers' pre-figurative, embodied and cognitive phases of learning through contemplation. Following their experience in this way resulted in a more reflective exploration of their subjectivities, and the development of a schema of learning in contemplation that I have termed *learning feelings*. The second section, made up of Chapters Six to Eight, examines the processes and outcomes of the *learning feelings* process and outlines specific aspects of this system to offer suggestions for the development of contemplative pedagogy. Throughout these two sections particular themes are repeated, including the co-researchers' experiences of an interrelationality, layers and levels, a ground-of-being, a true self and a witness consciousness. Their recurrence emphasises different aspects of the *contemplative trajectory* and the *learning feelings* process to reinforce the relatedness of these stages of learning through contemplation.

¹⁶ See Brookfield's (2005) critique of the devaluation of subjectivity in education.

Both sections trace the co-researchers' increasing familiarity with the contemplative interior and examine the pedagogical significance of this experience. Because of the difficulty of expressing and defining contemplative states of consciousness, the sections directly engage the co-researchers' experiences of these states using phenomenology and Yoga to investigate the *feeling nexus* through its outcomes. Reading the two sections of this thesis may reveal the contradictions implicit in any attempt to word¹⁷ states that by their very nature can remain at least partially untellable. It is for this reason that the phenomenologies of the co-researchers' contemplative experience guided this applied and theoretical examination of contemplative subjectivities. The aim in their provision was not to extend "the possibility of effective theory with which we can now explain and/or control the world...but to offer...the possibility of plausible insights that bring us in more direct contact with the world" (Van Manen 1990, p. 9). This phenomenological orientation potentially affords readers a deeper understanding of the contemplative interior and its importance in pedagogy.

Chapter One, the methods chapter, details the unique methodology that was developed for this project. It demonstrates how the project's phenomenological orientation underpins all stages from the fieldwork to the data analysis and illustrates how its phenomenological focus excavated important aspects of the contemplative interior. Chapter One also critiques the potential bias in this insider research and develops its final proposition that the open-ended interviewing in the fieldwork was in many instances a contemplative practice.

Chapter Two examines the co-researchers' experience of the interrelationality of their body and its two sides or 'leaves'. These 'leaves' are the 'sensing' and the 'sensed' (Merleau-Ponty 1968), which are interwoven by *flesh*. Chapter Two contrasts the body made permeable by Merleau-Ponty's *flesh* with Yogic understandings of a similar form of bodily being that intersects its contexts through *Brahman* the divine interrelationality, and the intertwining activities of the *gunas*. To further support an understanding of the ecological body, recent findings from neurophenomenology provide a physiological model of it. The thesis of interrelationality, proposed in Chapter Two by the permeable body, continues throughout the project, and suggestions for ways to integrate somatic learning in contemplative education are incorporated throughout the chapter.

¹⁷ I use the noun 'word' as a verb to emphasise the translation of a *feeling* to a phrase.

The following three chapters are introduced by a brief account of the *contemplative trajectory*.¹⁸ Each chapter investigates stages of this trajectory starting with the co-researchers' return to their bodies, growing awareness of internal sensations, development of an expanded affectivity, experiences of an altered sense of space and time and an elemental ground-of-being. Chapter Three describes and assesses the first and second stages of the trajectory. This starts with the co-researchers' realisation of the absence of and then return to their bodies through contemplation. Then in the second stage they develop a growing awareness of their movement through different levels of internal sensations and processes. The positive outcomes of both their experience of moving through inner levels of awareness and the reawakening of somatic awareness are explored through somatic education, while Yogic and phenomenological understandings of an inherent interrelationality and the co-researchers' immersion in it are presented as the foundation of these beneficial results. Chapter Three concludes by positing that the permeability of the somatic mode of being is what allows it to be interwoven with the other modes by the *feeling nexus*.

Chapter Four explores the middle sections of the trajectory where the co-researchers experienced an expanded form of affectivity and an altered sense of time and space. It appears that they developed these altered perceptions as their contemplative states became more refined through regular practice. In the third stage of the trajectory, they began to *feel* an expanded affectivity that they attempted to describe with metaphors, which indicated an interspersion of the affective through the other modes of being. The second section of this chapter, which explores the co-researchers' altered sense of time and space, finds similarities between their experiences and Yogic and phenomenological conceptions of time. These are then related to Mihály Csikszentmihályi's (1990/2009) *flow* theory to describe the slippage of perception that is required to *feel* the ecologies of self. The pedagogical significance of both the third and fourth stages of the trajectory is outlined by transformative, integral and contemplative education theory, which emphasises the importance of affect and the optimal state of *flow* or deep focus in education.

¹⁸ Although the co-researchers had various experiences of a passage through contemplation, it did not always occur in the sequence outlined here, though it did frequently start with the co-researchers' realisation of their estrangement from and return to their bodies.

Chapter Five analyses the last stage of the *contemplative trajectory* in which the co-researchers encountered a primordial ground-of-being composed of interpenetrating systems and processes of interrelationality. This stage didn't always conclude the co-researchers' passage through contemplation, because for some it was the only stage they experienced, while for others the phases were iterative and nonlinear. However, the co-researchers' awareness of this ground-of-being, which began with their recognition of a dimensionality to the internal space, was *felt* by many of them to be a 'place' they could inhabit that gave them a sense of stability and balance. In this last stage of the trajectory the co-researchers gained their most acute experience of an interrelationality or ecology, which is the form of the ground-of-being (and the *feeling nexus*). Their immersion in this interrelationality, which began in the first stage as they *felt* their bodies becoming permeable, continued in the different phases of the interspersion of themselves through their contexts in contemplation. Its compresence as both a ubiquitous field underpinning the trajectory and its final destination is illustrative of its significance in the co-researchers' meaning-making processes. The importance of the ground-of-being experience in education is illustrated by the positive outcomes of these processes, such as the stress reduction, increased ability to retain and retrieve information and the development of equanimity and metacognitive abilities reported by the co-researchers.

The second section of the thesis is introduced by the sixth chapter, which critically examines the embodied and liminal nature of the first phase of *learning feelings*. In this stage the co-researchers' pre-predicative or *felt knowing* developed through their somatic contemplative immersion in an encompassing interrelationality, which they frequently described using somatic metaphor. Chapter Six examines this interrelationality, the way it illustrates the *feeling nexus* and its importance in the co-researchers' meaning-making processes. It finds that the co-researchers' pre-predicative and embodied *feelings* led to the development of new understandings of themselves, their interpersonal relations and the way they engaged their courses of study.

Chapter Seven explores an intermediary phase of the last stage of *learning feelings*, where the co-researchers moved between pre-predicative and somatic, and cognitive experience, as they began to cognitively frame these *feelings*. The examination of this stage starts with an introduction to the pre-rational in meaning making, a permeable aspect of cognition and a preliminary feature of cognitive change, which is the 'true

self' experience. This is followed by an investigation of the co-researchers' interrelational experience, which is considered alongside the true self experience using phenomenological and Yogic theory. Chapter Seven concludes by critiquing notions of interrelationality in current contemplative education, and outlining the differences between these and its understanding of the ecological in learning.

The intermediary stage of cognitive change in the *learning feelings* process is followed by what I term 'direct' cognitive meaning making, which is the focus of Chapter Eight. In this last stage of *learning feelings* the co-researchers began to translate their *feelings* into concepts and values that they integrated into their daily lives. Chapter Eight starts with an examination of the co-researchers' developing metacognitive awareness, as this is an essential aspect of meaning making. Their metacognitive experiences are explored through contemplative and transformative education theory to illustrate the co-researchers made meaning and to emphasise the benefits of contemplation in education. The reflective and metacognitive awareness that arose for the co-researchers in contemplation often led to the questioning of their values and for some to their encounter with the God-shaped hole – that is, an awareness of a lack of spirituality in their lives. Each of these aspects of cognitive meaning making impacted the co-researchers' lives in varied ways. Some made lifestyle changes adopting new diet and exercise regimes; several found ways to improve study habits and their relationships; others questioned their current careers and relationships, or adopted spiritual and religious practices.

Chapters Six, Seven and Eight argue that there is a continuum of meaning making in contemplative learning, from the *feeling meanings* of pre-figurative experience to the cognitive integration of these *feelings*. These chapters propose that this continuum supports the changes that the co-researchers made. Their examination of this range of meaning making through contemplation supplies relevant features of this process for the development of contemplative pedagogy. They acknowledge that the construction of new meaning can be a slippery process and is frequently iterative rather than linear, suggesting that meaning is worked through in the contemplative interior and grounded in *feelings* before language. These aspects of change in the *learning feelings* process suggest that the new understandings can just as easily fade as solidify, and this is why, while outlining this process of change, these chapters continue to emphasise the messy,

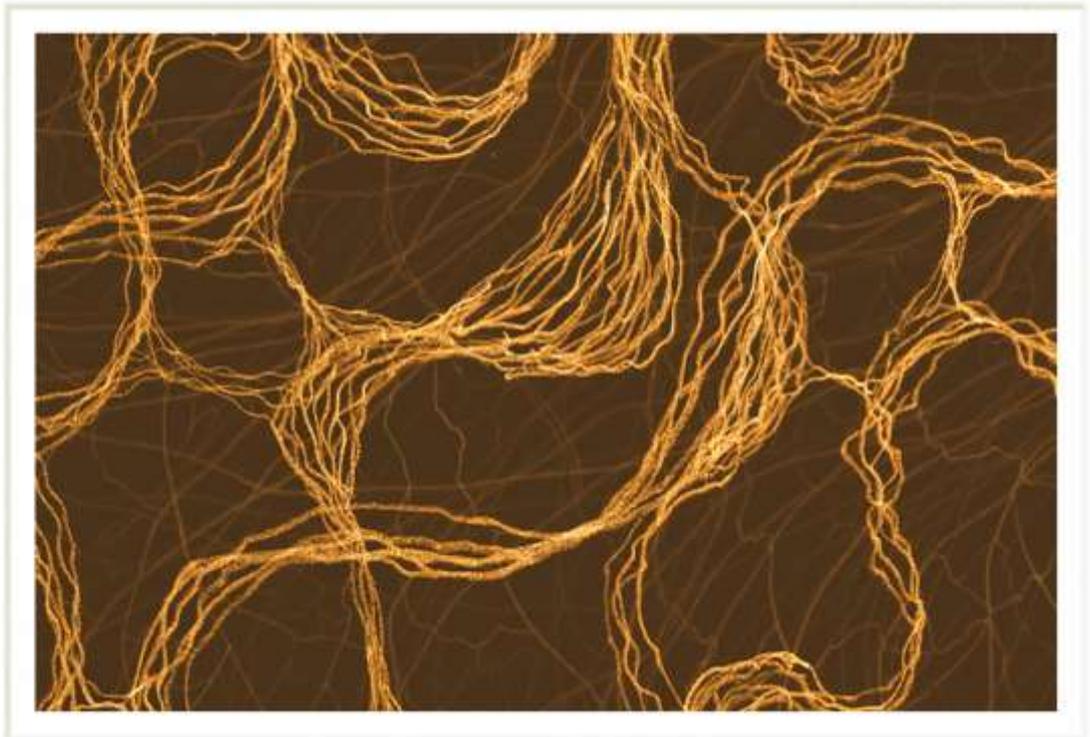
sometimes nonlinear nature of meaning making through contemplation. These three chapters thus illustrate the challenge of attempting to codify states of consciousness that are frequently experienced and described as ephemeral and ineffable. Nevertheless, the schema of *learning feelings* advanced in these chapters is a robust model that can be used in the design of contemplative pedagogy.

In summary

This thesis is framed by the ambiguity, which can arise from attempting to ‘word’ the inexpressible, and so highlights the challenge of engaging such a practice.

Nevertheless, its findings ably critique suggestions that the contemplative interior is impenetrable because of this ineffability. Each of this project’s unique concepts supports its aim to translate these findings, starting with its development of the *feeling nexus* as an elemental process of change and the contemplative consciousness that provides access to it. Next is the understanding of a *contemplative trajectory*, which can result in the awareness of an ecological body, the *feeling languages* and *maps*, and finally the schema of *learning feelings*. Each is offered, in this pioneering examination of the foundations of learning through contemplation, to contribute to the development of an ontology of contemplative consciousness in education and the creation of pedagogy congruent with contemplation.

Chapter One: Study Design and Methodology



Cameron Beau Wylie Foster, 2013

Phenomenology is accessible only through a phenomenological method.

(Merleau-Ponty 1945/1962, p. viii)

This project's critical examination of the pre-predicative foundations of learning through contemplation required, as Maurice Merleau-Ponty proposes above, the first-person orientation of a phenomenological method. I formulated a method congruent with the deeply subjective and reflective state of contemplative consciousness by adapting Clark Moustakas's (1994) transcendental phenomenological method and Max van Manen's phenomenological approach (1990). Realisations from the fieldwork and data analysis stages influenced the development of the methods, as did relevant phenomenology and classical Yoga philosophy theory. In addition I applied a contemplative orientation at each stage of the research, including the development of a contemplative form of in-depth interviewing in the fieldwork phase. This chapter examines the design and application of this contemplative phenomenological methodology starting with the fieldwork, which began with a scoping exercise in five arts, ecology and meditation retreats in New Zealand and Australia. Following this is an examination of the second stage of fieldwork, which was conducted in 2009 at a range of graduate and undergraduate contemplative education courses in schools of theology, dance, art history, leadership and psychology at four universities in the USA. Following the discussion of the fieldwork are sections on the methods and data analysis phases of the study. Lastly, this project's in-depth, open-ended interviewing is defined as a contemplative practice.

The project's phenomenological orientation and interdisciplinarity

This study is unequivocally qualitative and phenomenological; it does not "assert a physical and social reality independent of those who experience it, a reality that can be tested and defined objectively" (Rossman & Rallis 2011, p. 8). It is interpretive, not predictive, and emergent rather than prefigured. It understands that "life occurs in context" (ibid.). This project's interdisciplinarity is impacted by context, for as an interdisciplinary researcher, I am working to "ecologize the subjects being studied" (Morin in Morosini 2007, p. 466), that is, to consider, through a range of disciplines, the significance of their contexts. In this study these contexts include aspects of the co-researchers' daily lives, their inner and outer ecologies, and the point of intersection

between their subjective contemplative states and the cognitive realms where they make meaning of them. In addition to the issue of context, an interdisciplinary approach was taken because of the range of the somatic, cognitive, affective and transcendent modes of being that the *feeling nexus* combines. The central disciplines chosen to provide this broad coverage are phenomenology, classical Yoga¹⁹ philosophy, phenomenology and associated sciences, and contemplative, somatic, integral and transformative education. My aim to generate new knowledge about the contemplative state of consciousness in learning also necessitated an interdisciplinary approach as “the links between the interdisciplinary and innovation are unequivocal” (Morosini 2007, p. 9).

Phenomenology and Yoga philosophy ground the interdisciplinary framework of this study and were selected because of their focus on first-person states of consciousness. Phenomenology is distinguished as the “constitutive analysis of the structure of consciousness” (Tymieniecka 2002, p. 2), which “emphasizes subjectivity” (Moustakas 1994, p. 45). While acknowledging the spiritual and religious dimension of Yoga²⁰ it is primarily used here in its form as a ‘psycho-technology’ that provides maps, “psychocosmograms or guides to both the inner and outer universe” (Feuerstein 2008, p. 239). Their correlation supports the translation of precognitive and embodied contemplative experience. Phenomenology does this by providing Yoga with an articulate secular vocabulary (Morley 2008), while I propose Yoga gives phenomenology an analogous transcendent²¹ vernacular. As ‘experiential ontologies’ they affirm the “domain of subjectively lived experience and promote a meditation

¹⁹ Throughout this project the term classical Yoga philosophy is used interchangeably with Yoga philosophy, Yoga and Yogic.

²⁰ Yoga is present in two distinct ways in this thesis – as a practice and philosophy, which provides the necessary congruence with the fieldwork methods and theory. Firstly, this project engages the co-researchers’ contemplative experience of the physical, mental and spiritual aspects of yoga as denoted by its six traditional paths. These are *Raja* or ‘royal’ yoga, which focuses on meditation, *Karma* yoga the path of selfless service, *Bhakti* yoga which is expressed through devotional practices, *Jnana*, the yoga of the mind and *Tantra*, the yoga of ritual. However, this examination of the contemplative state of consciousness in education does not specifically focus on any one of these paths. Nor does it exclusively examine yoga; rather it follows the co-researchers through their varied secular, spiritual and religious experiences. Secondly, as a central theoretical platform in this study Yoga Philosophy, (one of six *āstika* or orthodox schools of Hindu philosophy) and its correlation with phenomenology, provides this project’s interdisciplinary framework. Both the theoretical and experiential aspects of Yoga combine in this project’s interpretation of the co-researchers’ pre-predicative, somatic and cognitive experiences of contemplative education.

²¹ I employ the common usage of transcendent - beyond and outside the ordinary range of human experience or understanding - as a means to lend a secular understanding to the mode of being that co-researchers variously described as an ‘energy’, ‘like God’, ‘spiritual’.

method²² that maintains neutrality towards belief systems” (Morley 2008, p. 160). These sciences of consciousness and perception provide access to the contemplative interior through Yoga’s embodied practices and extensive empirical research,²³ and the phenomenological understanding of perception and an interrelational body.

The contemplative experience that this approach engages is embodied and at times ineffable and messy. Rather than attempting to regulate this ‘messiness’ by defining the conditions, controlling variables and using statistically determined methods, I followed the co-researchers’ passage through contemplation. This phenomenological approach prohibited the use of methods such as control groups, for it stands “in stark contrast to experimental laboratory conditions, probabilistic sampling strategies, and quasi-experimental designs that use control groups to compare intervention effects” (Rossman & Rallis 2011, p. 8). While these methods ably support a wide range of approaches in qualitative research, the nature of the contemplative state required the first-person approach of a phenomenological method.

Background to the project

In Phenomenological research, the question grows out of an intense interest in a particular problem or topic. The researcher’s excitement and curiosity inspire the search. Personal history brings the core of the problem into focus. As the fullness of the topic emerges, strands and tangents of it may complicate an articulation of a manageable and specific question. Yet this process of permitting aspects of the topic to enter into awareness is essential in the formulation of a core question that will remain viable and alive throughout the investigation. (Moustakas 1994, pp. 104-105)

The development of this project’s core question happened over an extended period of time, which I realised as I reflected on a colleague’s question at the beginning of the

²² The form of phenomenological reflective practice that Morley (2001) is referring to is what he terms Husserl’s ‘radical meditation method’, or the application of the *epoché*. The *epoché* or the “parenthesizing of the Objective world” (Husserl in Natanson 1973, p. 59) is a method that Husserl directs phenomenologists to engage so that they can ‘return to the things themselves’.

²³ Seals of the Indus Valley Civilization dating to the mid 3rd millennium BCE show figures in yogic positions, suggesting a 5500-year history (Filmer-Lorch 2012, p. 6).

project. When she asked, “Why the contemplative?” I was nonplussed, as trance, transpersonal and contemplative states of consciousness have been such a long-term interest that the original reason did not immediately spring to mind. Thinking back to my first experiments with trance video in the early 1990s,²⁴ I remembered my fascination with the ‘otherness’ of these states, in particular the way that they can transport the practitioner to the ‘foreignness’ of their own internal landscape, a space that can be *felt*, as both in and outside of them. I experimented with this ambiguity in the videos I made using trance-inducing visual rhythms. In later community art projects I engaged the contemplative through art and movement practices to help the individuals I worked with develop new meaning-making processes.

However, it wasn’t until I had established a regular contemplative practice that I began to question how these ephemeral and often ineffable states could result in the changes I was experiencing and observing in the individuals I worked with. These questions and experiences collided as I tried to frame an answer to my colleague’s question. Can the ambiguity of these states be resolved? Does it need to be? How do they actuate change in individuals’ meaning-making processes? What are they and how do they work? At the time I didn’t outline my confusion but simply told her that contemplation in learning is beneficial and that it has been shown, both by psychological and neuroscience research, to produce positive outcomes for students, including stress reduction, increased focus, the ability to retain and retrieve information, heightened equanimity, metacognition and empathy.

Returning to her question, I reflected on my contemplative experience, and then in an initial engagement with the literature I began to frame the project’s central research questions. I knew of the physiological substrate that neuro- and cognitive scientists are proposing for the positive outcomes of contemplation in education but I was interested in the possibility of layers of subjective experience beyond that substrate. I wanted to know if there was a deeper level or a ground underpinning learning, and if so, did it contain mechanisms of change. My curiosity about such a substrate was initiated by my sense that particular *feelings* I had experienced in contemplation indicated a foundational level. However, I didn’t have any words to describe that ground or those

²⁴ This culminated in the government-funded *Flowers: A trance video*. Morgan P, 2000, *Flowers: A trance video*, Betacam/DVD. Wellington, New Zealand.

feelings, which were both subtle and profound. These *feelings* included the sudden sense, in a yoga *āsana*, of clicking into what *felt* like a universal template, as I turned, bent my knee and stretched my arms into Warrior II pose (*Virabhadrasana*); or the *feeling* of the edge of my body, curving, and then merging with the space around it, as I moved from one lying yoga pose to another.

When I began to find similar *feelings* in the co-researchers' reports from contemplation, it confirmed my initial sense that they may somehow reveal the elemental level that I suspected grounded learning in contemplation. However, it wasn't until I found a quote on the kīrtan²⁵ singer Krishna Das's *Door of Faith* CD that I started to understand how to 'word'²⁶ what the co-researchers and I were *feeling*. He spoke of the effect that the songs and mantras²⁷ on his CD initially had on him, "When I first heard these prayers in India I had no idea what the words meant, but the *Bhāva* or feeling went straight into me and answered my inner prayer of longing" (Das 2003, p. 1). The understanding of *Bhāva*²⁸ as a type of *feeling* that could somehow translate the meaning of the words as it penetrated Krishna Das, initiated my theoretical development of an elemental precognitive process underpinning learning.

This was reinforced by my reading of the humanist psychologist John Heron's (1992) *Feeling and personhood: Psychology in another key* in which he outlines a theory of 'personhood' where *feeling* is much more than emotion. Distinguishing between the two he states, "By 'feeling' I refer, with special usage, to the capacity of the psyche to participate in wider unities of being, to become at one with the differential content of a whole field of experience" (Heron 1992, p. 16). By correlating these conceptions of *feeling* with the co-researchers' reports, in an engagement with the theory, my understanding of the *feeling nexus* hypothesis evolved. I then became aware of the ways the co-researchers travelled through stages of a learning trajectory and made

²⁵ *Kirtan* or *kirtana* (chanting) is a form of Hindu devotional call and response singing or chanting. It is often a part of *Bhakti* or devotional Yoga, and many *kīrtan* are sung in praise of particular deities.

²⁶ I use the noun 'word' as a verb to emphasise the translation of a *feeling* to a phrase.

²⁷ *Mantras* (prayers, hymns) are generally understood to be sacred sounds or words that are repeated in meditation, silently or out loud, or sung in *kīrtana*. This form of mantra repetition is said to be able to produce spiritual transformation.

²⁸ *Bhāva* is often translated as feeling or emotion, though the definition the Yoga scholar Georg Feuerstein (1990) provides is more useful here: "*bhāva*, which is a derivative of *bhū*, means 'being,' 'condition,' 'nature,' 'disposition,' and 'feeling'" (p. 54). In this sense *bhāva* is a 'beingness' in which the adherent is immersed in *feelings* that contain many conditions that can ultimately lead to *rasa* or the total immersion in the "bliss of intimate love-participation in God" (ibid.).

meaning of their experiences in a series of pre-figurative, embodied and cognitive stages. These realisations helped answer this project's core questions about the possibility of a foundational mechanism underpinning learning through contemplation.

Design and methodology

I began designing this project's methodological approach in an engagement with Max van Manen's (1977) phenomenological human science approach, which hinges on "knowledge in the sense of *Verstehen* (understanding), which cannot be attained by the strict or empirical-analytic sciences" (p. 214). His methods allow the researcher to grasp individuals' 'inner realities':

Phenomenology is the study of the lifeworld – the world as we immediately experience it pre-reflectively rather than as we conceptualize, categorize, or reflect on it...Phenomenology asks, "what is this or that kind of experience like?" It differs from almost every other science in that it attempts to gain insightful descriptions of the way we experience the world pre-reflectively. (Van Manen 1990, p. 9)

Van Manen's approach was then incorporated with Clark Moustakas's (1994) transcendental phenomenological method (TPM). In brief, Moustakas's schema²⁹ includes: 1) processes, which involve the application of the *epoché* and phenomenological reduction; 2) imaginative variation; and 3) methodology, a) preparing to collect data, b) collecting data, c) organizing, analysing and synthesizing data (Moustakas, 1994 pp. 180-182). An important aspect of Moustakas's approach is his understanding of the role of the participants, which is indicated by his use of the term 'co-researchers' for the fieldwork subjects, interviewees or participants. I also employ this term to acknowledge the role that the co-researchers play in the production of the research and in that sense the interrelationality of researcher and co-researcher.

This project follows Moustakas's approach by using the qualitative tools of participation observation and unstructured interviewing, though it modified his methods

²⁹ A full summary of Moustakas's TPM is contained in Appendix C of his *Phenomenological research methods* (pp. 180-182).

to account for the project's contemplative orientation. Aspects of his TPM were also omitted or changed when they conflicted with the study's understanding of fieldwork, insider bias and reflexivity. His method was further customised by drawing from other qualitative theorists, as he has done himself, with his modifications and correlation of the Van Kaam and Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen methods. Each of these omissions and additions created a unique variation on Moustakas's method so as to allow "the research design...[to]...match the question asked" (Cohen et al. 2000, p. 3).

Participant observation, in-depth interviewing, insider research and reflexivity

My role as an insider³⁰ and use of participant observation and in-depth interviewing provide a comprehensive means to engage the deeply subjective state of contemplative consciousness. My insider status and the qualitative methods were employed in all the fieldwork interviews because they produced answers 'thick'³¹ (Geertz 1973, p.6) with the co-researchers' *emic*³² responses to contemplative experience. They did this in different ways in both stages of the fieldwork. In the first phase, at the five adult education retreats in Australia and New Zealand, they facilitated my role as a workshop participant or observer-as-participant (Johnson & Christensen 2010), while in the second, at colleges in the USA, they supported my position as an insider, or contemplative practitioner observing and participating in contemplative education.

Participant observation is defined by the qualitative researchers Kathleen DeWalt and Billie DeWalt (2002) as "a way to collect data in naturalistic settings by ethnographers who observe and/or take part in the common and uncommon activities of the people

³⁰ Qualitative research posits two categories of researchers, the insider who is a member of the group being researched, and the outsider, who is not a member of the group.

³¹ The anthropologist Clifford Gertz describes these responses as 'thick' because they provide data that reveals more than just the surface of experience by engaging the "conceptual structures that inform subjects' acts" (Gertz 1973, p. 27). In the development of his ethnography, Gertz defined two aspects of the 'interpretive sciences' or qualitative research, which are thick description and diagnosis. Diagnosis or 'specification' is "stating, as explicitly as we can manage, what the knowledge thus attained demonstrates about the society in which it is found" (ibid.). He proposed that both are necessary to develop 'knowledge' that is thick with the experience from deep within the participants' worlds. While Geertz first developed the terms 'thick description' and 'rich data' in the 1970s, they are still in use and retain much of their original meaning. As Kathy Charmaz (2007) states, "rich data is, detailed, focused, and full. They reveal participants' views, feelings, intentions, and actions as well as the contexts and structures of their lives" (p. 14).

³² *Emic* is an anthropological term that describes an account of an individual from within his or her culture, as opposed to the *etic*, which is an account of that culture from someone who is not a part of it (Barfield 1997, p. 148).

being studied” (p. 2). The rigorous, open-ended and flexible nature of participant observation, while useful in both stages of the fieldwork, was particularly valuable in the first stage. My use of it to navigate the dual roles of participant and observer was facilitated by the flexibility of the method. Danny Jorgensen (1989) terms this ‘researcher interpretation’, which he suggests is essential because the variable nature of the field requires a continual redefinition of approaches and practices.

The unstructured interviews used in the fieldwork were helpful in both stages as they elicited compelling accounts of the co-researchers’ subjective experience.³³ They do this by providing a space in which theories can develop in the process of the conversation (Kendall 2011), in what is described by Immy Holloway as the “conversation with a purpose”³⁴ (1997, p. 94). In unstructured interviewing, questionnaires are not used, as the questions arise in what Karin Klenke (2008) terms the ‘natural course of things’. This form of interviewing also relies on the social interaction between the researcher and participant as this increases “the salience and relevance of the questions” (Klenke 2008, p. 125).

This process elicited interviews thick with the co-researchers’ stories from their interiors and was supported by my role as an insider or contemplative practitioner. Bringing my emic perspective to the observation and interviews supported the development of the highly textured³⁵ data that arose in many of the fieldwork interviews. It impacted not only the depth of sharing between the co-researchers and me, but also my level of engagement with the analysis of the data. In both stages it helped me “discern and detect unexpected insights during the research process” (Klenke 2008, p. 12). Importantly, at the interview stage the contextual knowledge (Patton 2002, p. 399) I had gained through my contemplative practice facilitated trust between the co-researchers and me. I believe that the high levels of trust between us, and my ability to interpret the fieldwork findings, would have taken longer to develop if I had been an outsider.

³³ Where possible the segments of the co-researchers’ interviews used in this project are supplied verbatim, which means that there may be some grammatical errors in these sections of the text.

³⁴ Holloway (1997) describes the in-depth interview as one in “which the interviewer aims to obtain the perspectives, feelings and perceptions from the *participant(s)*” (p. 94).

³⁵ In many ways textured data is similar to Geertz’s rich data. David Harper and Andrew Thompson (2011) describe texture in a qualitative interview as the ‘color’, ‘quality’, and ‘meaning’ of the participant’s experience. They suggest that while the phenomenological method is time-consuming and demanding, it can ‘evoke’ texture from the participants’ reports. They claim that this type of “evocation means that experience is brought vividly into presence so that we can phenomenologically reflect on it” (van Maden in Harper & Thompson 2011, p. 121).

Nevertheless, this approach is often criticised for what is termed ‘insider bias’, commonly understood as the lack of objectivity attributed to research conducted by an ‘insider’ or member of the community they are studying. My experience of contemplative practice brings an implied bias to this project, something that Thanos Athanasiou (2009) and his colleagues outline in their statement, “Insider studies, for example, can be very valuable, but they cannot be ‘objective’; their strength lies in their insight and informed perspective” (p. 249). The beneficial features of insider research do not necessarily override the positivist critique of the lack of objectivity and validity of insider researchers. However, like other qualitative researchers, I understand that the positivist ideal of objectivity is not always desirable in human research. As Kate Van Heugten (2004) concludes, “Subjectivity is no longer eschewed to the extent it once was. With this, the exploration of less quantifiable experiences, and of metaphor and narrative has been reintroduced into social sciences” (p. 207). Like many qualitative researchers, I accept the inevitability of bias. I am less concerned with replicating findings; rather, I focused “on the context of the speaker and the account, and on the account’s ‘textuality’ and internal construction” (Opie in Van Heugten 2004, p. 207).

As this study is sited in the subjectivity of the co-researchers’ contemplative states of consciousness, the textuality of those states was of primary importance. To gain entry into their deep texture it required an experiential understanding of the precognitive aspect of contemplative. While my contemplative experience helped with this, I also provided co-researchers with access to my interiority through our mindful engagement in the contemplative interviews. Although there is a risk of collecting irrelevant data in this form of open-ended unstructured interviewing, I believe that it is the strategy most congruent with the contemplative site of this project and its theoretical foundations. I did not engage a ‘positivist desire’ to improve accuracy by the avoidance of self-disclosures (Van Heugten 2004, p. 207). Instead, I disclosed my contemplative experience as a way to create a platform of exchange between me and the co-researchers.

For this reason I chose not to implement particular methods, such as triangulation,³⁶ which some qualitative researchers do as a means to claim objectivity. Instead, I understand that knowledge is incomplete and contextual and that knowledge and meaning are “realized not through individual intention but through inter-subjective transactions” (Usher 1996, p. 51). Phenomenological methods were used in this relativist³⁷ project to provide the form of rigor which results from intersubjective exchanges between researcher and co-researcher that can provide “sufficient detail and context for the reader to assess our interpretation and our trustworthiness” (Brown 2005, p. 110).

Reflexivity

The insider/outsider debate is linked to questions regarding researchers’ potential lack of awareness concerning their impact on the research, or their lack of reflexivity.³⁸ Both issues engage notions of subjectivity and reliability. Challenges to insider research frequently emphasise the proposed lack of validity and replicability of insider research, which many qualitative researchers counter by emphasising its trustworthiness or authenticity. These researchers are more directly concerned with their ability to monitor personal values and beliefs in the research process. Qualitative researchers often develop particular strategies in an attempt to monitor and avoid their prejudices, and while I signal my position,³⁹ I engage ‘indirect reflexivity’. This is a reflexivity, which the educational philosopher Robin Usher (1996) proposes as a ‘continuous potential’ in

36 Athanasious et al. (2009) describe triangulation as the “name given to the method that allows the study to be validated against external tests by using numerous different methodologies to investigate a single hypothesis. The methodologies used must have different weaknesses in order to prove useful” (p. 492).

³⁷ This project is aligned with James Scheurich’s social or postmodern relativism, which he describes as an “unabashed recognition that all epistemology, ontology, and the ways of thinking that yield such categories as epistemology and ontology are socially conditioned and historically relative or contextual” (1997, p. 33).

³⁸ In broad terms reflexivity is the researcher’s maintenance of an awareness of his or her effect on the research. Burke Johnson and Larry Christensen (2010) simply describe reflexivity as a form of critical self-reflection by the researchers on their biases. They propose that it is a key strategy used to understand researcher bias, stating, “Through reflexivity, researchers become more self-aware, and they monitor and attempt to control their biases” (p. 265). While reflexivity is a highly contested concept in social science discourse, Raymond Madden’s (2010) overview in his *Being ethnographic: A guide to the theory and practice of ethnography* is provided here as an introduction. He outlines George Marcus’s four forms of reflexivity that are operating in the social sciences, starting with the basic or ‘null’ form, which he describes as the self-critique approach; Bourdieu’s sociological reflexivity or the commitment to sustain objectivity; and anthropological reflexivity and feminist reflexivity, both of which are “dedicated to the understanding of the politics of ‘positionality’” (Madden, 2010, p. 21).

³⁹ A position directly influenced by my contemplative experience from both yoga and contemplative arts practices.

research. He outlines it with Patricia Lather's statement that, "in our action is our knowing" (Lather in Usher 1996, p. 38), and concludes by claiming that reflexivity "can only be approached allusively" (Usher 1996, p. 50).

This understanding of the allusive nature of reflexivity is based on the proposition that there is no "one-way street between the researcher and the object of study; rather, the two affect each other mutually and continually in the course of the research process" (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009, p. 79). The relationship between researcher and co-researcher is illustrated in the moment-to-moment awareness of contemplative interviewing, which Moustakas (1994) describes as the "open-ended investigation of 'presence'" (p. 108). The presence,⁴⁰ or attention and intense focus applied in this form of interviewing, can inhibit premeditated bias. It could be argued that this then leaves the way open for an unconscious bias to arise, though this in turn may be reversed as the researcher's and co-researchers' values and worldviews merge in the interview.

In his development of presence Moustakas's outlines a reflective stage where indirect reflexivity can occur. His approach is predicated on two primary aspects, 'texture' and 'structure', and it is at the juncture of both that reflexivity arises. In his method, texture is the 'what' and structure the 'how' of intentional experience. In the first stage of phenomenological research after the researcher applies the *epoché* they can then examine the texture of the object of research (Moustakas 1994). Following this intuitive and pre-reflective exploration of it, the researcher is able to describe the how or structure of the phenomenon being examined. In this instant, when the researcher is reflecting on the texture in an attempt to explain structure, indirect reflexivity can arise. It is here that the researcher moves "towards its reflexive reference in the 'how' of the experience" (Ihde in Moustakas 1994, p. 79).

This point is where my approach both matches Moustakas's and departs from it, for although I applied the *epoché* in the fieldwork interviews, they were not free of my history, experiences or preconceptions. I was, as Moustakas suggests, transparent to myself in the deep focus of the interviews, which did "allow whatever was before [me]"

⁴⁰ An understanding of 'presence' as a contemplative mode is outlined in Thomas Bein and Beverly Bien's definition of mindfulness as "a quality of gentle presence. Mindfulness is the capacity to be present with what is going on here and now, without judgement or resistance, without evasion or analysis" (2003, p. 24).

in consciousness to disclose itself” (1994, p. 86). However, the deliberate tendering of my contemplative experience in the interviews meant that the practice was not completely naive. This was not as Moustakas suggests, because the *epoché* is “rarely perfectly achieved” (1994, p. 90), but because it was necessary to include my contemplative experience in the interviews, for the reasons discussed above.

The critique of the lack of reflexivity in insider research is countered by the authenticity that can arise in this approach. By engaging the indirect reflexivity that is a continuous potential in phenomenological methods I sought this authenticity, as these practices emphasise the researcher’s reflective state of consciousness and the possibility for intersubjective exchange in the participant observation and interviews.

Results of the first stage of the fieldwork

The method I developed using indirect reflexivity, insider research, in-depth interviewing, participant observation and phenomenology was refined in the first stage of the fieldwork. Participating in and observing the five retreats of this stage indicated the need for a wider range of co-researchers and for these co-researchers to still be adults rather than children, as a certain level of self-reflexivity was required. For these reasons I shifted the research site from adult education to higher education and took my fieldwork to the USA, where the most recent re-emergence of contemplative education is focused. The four universities I visited were LMU, Los Angeles; CIIS, San Francisco; Saint Marys College of California, Morgia (near San Francisco); and Ramapo College of Mahwah, New Jersey. These sites of contemplative education were selected because they house leading academics in the field and incorporate contemplative practices in their curricula.

The methods

This section is introduced by an overview of the two stages of the fieldwork, which explores the impact of the participant–observer role on the data and the refinements made in response to the changing nature of the fieldwork. The initial scoping exercise in the first stage introduces this section, followed by sketches of the five retreats. The

fieldwork and data analysis are then outlined, and the section closes with an account of the study's in-depth interviewing as a form of contemplative practice.

Overview of the stages of the fieldwork

The fieldwork has two stages.⁴¹ The first was an initial scoping exercise in a personal retreat (see Appendix 5), and four arts, ecology and meditation retreats in New Zealand and Australia (see Appendices 6, 7, 8, 9). The second stage comprised 10 weeks of fieldwork at schools of theology, dance, art history, leadership and psychology at four universities where contemplative practices have been integrated with existing curricula. My interest in and experience with contemplative practice initially directed the choice of the fieldwork sites, particularly the identification of the five contemplative environmental multimodal art and yoga retreats in the first stage.

The first retreat was a personal one conducted in November 2008 at The Sanctuary, a retreat centre in Mission Beach, Northern Queensland, Australia.⁴² It was in this early scoping exercise that I experienced the 'embodied ethnographies' (Conguergood 2006) of the autoethnographic⁴³ approach to participant observation. I then identified four retreats and workshops that I attended between November 2008 and April 2009.⁴⁴ At each of these locations, in an environmental education centre, a converted fishing lodge, a camp site, and a Yoga ashram, I conducted a range of fieldwork activities, which are outlined in the appendices: Appendix 1: Table 1, Overview of activities in stage one of the fieldwork.

⁴¹ The 86 interviews conducted in the first stage of the fieldwork (from November 2008 to April 2009) and the second stage (from October to December 2009) are stored at the School of Humanities, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, UNSW, Sydney, Australia. The demographics for these interviews are detailed in Appendix 3, Interview Demographics.

⁴² See Appendix 5.

⁴³ Autoethnography is described by Holt in Hemmingson as "a genre of writing and research that connects the personal to the cultural, placing the self within a social context...These texts are usually written in the first person and feature dialogue, emotion, and self-consciousness as relational and institutional stories affected by history, social structure, and culture" (2009, p. 30). Although autoethnography was not used in the rest of the fieldwork, the impetus for this research is autobiographical, and my insider influence on the project can be seen throughout it.

⁴⁴ These retreats were the *Stillness in Action* retreat in Rathdowney, Queensland, Australia (see Appendix 6); an environmental art retreat called *Beyond the Doors* in Whatipu, North Island of New Zealand (see Appendix 7); the Yoga in Daily Life *Kriya Anusthan* yoga retreat, Dungog, Hunter Valley, NSW, Australia (see Appendix 8); and the Satyananda *Yoga Ecology* retreat at Mangrove Mountain, Central Coast, NSW, Australia (see Appendix 9).

Insights from stage one of the fieldwork: 14th November 2008 – 26th April, 2009

Two principal insights arose from the first stage of the fieldwork (see Appendix 1): firstly, that this is an embodied form of research, and secondly that there are implicit challenges in the participant–observer role. They are important here as both confirm the choice of the phenomenological method and support this project’s understanding of contemplation as an embodied state of consciousness. While each stage of the fieldwork tested the methods against challenges of the field, it was the first that confirmed Dwight Conquergood’s (1991) proposition that ethnography is an embodied practice that requires the researcher to become its ‘instrument’. This was certainly my experience in the five retreats I attended, each of which demanded my embodied participation, which was similar to what Erving Goffman (1989) describes:

It seems to me, by subjecting yourself, your own body and your own personality, and your own social situation, to the set of contingencies that play upon a set of individuals...so that you are close to them while they are responding to what life does to them. (p. 125)

By ‘subjecting’ or risking myself, in these retreats – as I lay with the co-researchers in leaf mold, stood together feet freezing at the edge of the sea, and knelt and stood and knelt, shifting our knees needle-marked by stiff grasses – I was experiencing “at a bodily as well as an intellectual level, the vicissitudes of translation” (Clifford in Conguergood 2006, p. 352). Through these embodied encounters I came to understand that “Phenomenology is understood by doing it” (Wagner 1983, p.8).

The phenomenological approach in these five retreats also revealed the challenges of the oscillating role of participant observer in phenomenological research. I became aware of these difficulties as I experienced the tension inherent in the ‘observation of participation’ at the points between the “autobiographical impulse (the gaze inward)...[and]...the ethnographic impulse (the gaze outward)” (Tedlock 1991, p. 467). Here Tedlock outlines the conflict inherent in the dual nature of the participant-observer role, which requires a shift between the layperson’s subjective experience of a phenomenon, and the researcher’s objective observation of it.

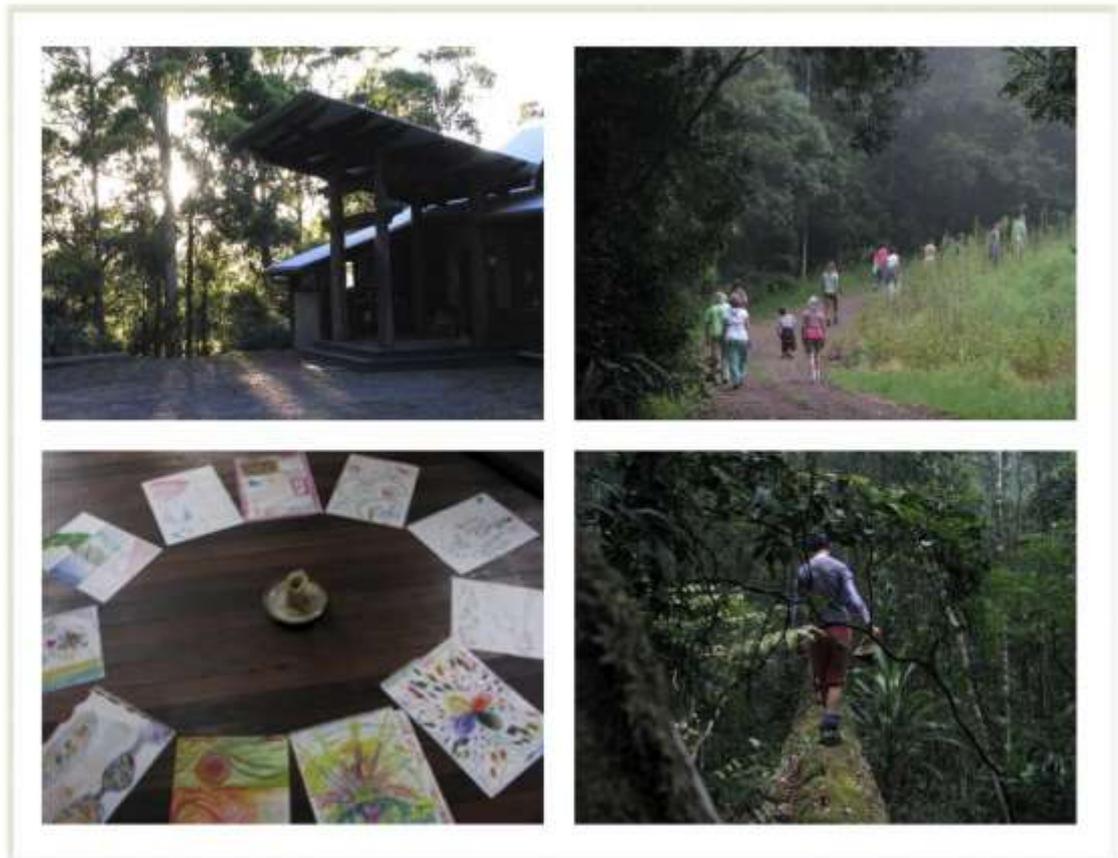
I initially encountered the challenge of this role in the first two retreats as I became aware of my uncertainty about my ability to transition between the roles. This meant that I did not conduct interviews on these retreats. Because of these tensions researchers need to be able to overcome conflict in participant observation by “adopting as open an approach as possible” (Hitchcock & Hughes 1995, p. 48). I overcame my awkwardness with the observer-participant-observer role⁴⁵ by practising each role separately. These included the retreatant, observer of my participation and participant-observer roles individually, which helped me then perform the three simultaneously. Additionally, this method enabled me to observe and negotiate my movement between different roles and states of consciousness.⁴⁶ Images from these five retreats follow:

⁴⁵ By using the phrase ‘observer-participant-observer’ I am indicating the cycling between roles that is implicit in the insider participant-observer approach in qualitative research.

⁴⁶ Full immersion as a participant in the retreats also facilitated the development of friendships with a number of the co-researchers, which led, some months after the second retreat, to interviews in Brisbane, Sydney, and by Skype to other locations.



Stillness in Action: Meditation and Action for the World Retreat (1), Wild Mountains Trust, Rathdowney, South East Queensland, Australia, 18th – 25th January, 2009.



Stillness in Action: Meditation and Action for the World Retreat (2), Wild Mountains Trust, Rathdowney, South East Queensland, Australia, 18th – 25th January, 2009.



Beyond the doors: A residential movement-based workshop (1), Whatipu Lodge, Department of Conservation Reserve, Pararaha Valley, Waitakere Ranges, North Island of New Zealand, 23rd-27th March, 2009.



Beyond the doors: A residential movement-based workshop (2), Whatipu Lodge, Department of Conservation Reserve, Pararaha Valley, Waitakere Ranges, North Island of New Zealand, 23rd-27th March, 2009.



Bush Yoga Retreat (1), Yoga in Daily Life (YIDL) Retreat Center, Dungog, Hunter Valley, NSW, Australia 7th – 10th April, 2009.



Bush Yoga Retreat (2), Yoga in Daily Life (YIDL) Retreat Center, Dungog, Hunter Valley, NSW, Australia 7th – 10th April, 2009.



Yoga Ecology, Satyananda Yoga Retreat, Mangrove Mountain Retreat Centre (1), Mangrove Creek Road, NSW, Australia, 21st – 26th April 2009



Yoga Ecology, Satyananda Yoga Retreat, Mangrove Mountain Retreat Centre (2), Mangrove Creek Road, NSW, Australia, 21st – 26th April 2009

Stage two of the fieldwork

The first stage of the fieldwork highlighted the need for a second fieldwork phase, which was carried out in contemplative education⁴⁷ settings in the USA. There were four reasons for this: firstly, to expand the diversity⁴⁸ of co-researchers, as the majority of people in the first stage were middle-aged Western women. This also meant that there was a wider range of contemplative practices to study. The second reason was to observe a selection of contemplative education settings in the USA, which is where the current expression of contemplative education emerged. Thirdly, it provided the opportunity to compare data from the more formal settings of higher education, with data from the less formal adult education retreats. Lastly, observation of, and at times, participation in, the contemplative higher education courses helped answer questions I had about the links between pedagogy and the co-researchers' reports of the positive changes they experienced in contemplative education.

Unexpectedly, a number of the co-researchers in this study were yoga practitioners, it wasn't my intention to select and interview so many of them but it fortuitously supports the congruency of methods and theory. While this may suggest a bias yoga practitioners were not sought out and the spiritual or religious orientation of the co-researchers is not a focus of this study. It is also important to remember that this project's methodological approach means that questionnaires were not used. Therefore, there is no systematic recording of the co-researchers' spiritual or religious affiliations. My aim is not to investigate possible links between the co-researchers' religious or spiritual beliefs and contemplative education, plus yoga was frequently only one of a number of these co-researchers' practices. Catherine, a past yoga teacher in Los Angeles, provides a good example of the eclectic nature of the co-researchers' approaches to spirituality and religion. She comes from a Catholic family, once taught yoga, still practices it, and now participates in a Christian Meditation group. The eclectic nature of Catherine's spirituality and that of many other co-researchers can be described as 'Self Religions', something that is addressed in detail in Chapter Five.

⁴⁷ I first became aware of this orientation through the Centre of Contemplative Mind in Society (CCMS), which also hosts the Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education (<http://www.contemplativemind.org/>).

⁴⁸ I felt that it was necessary to do this because of the subjective nature of contemplative states of consciousness.

Though in brief these are approaches to spirituality or religion in which individuals create their own practices by, for example, combining the religion they were brought up in with yoga and New Age religion. Other co-researchers had no religious affiliation, some took a secular or exercise-based approach to yoga and several moved between a range of practices, which is exemplified by the co-researchers who called themselves Hinjewes and Bujewes (Hindu and Buddhist Jews). This project does acknowledge the co-researchers' Self Religions but its methodology and aims has meant that the impact of spirituality and religion on their learning through contemplation was not a central focus. However, a recurring phenomena in the co-researchers' interviews related to spiritual experience is briefly discussed in Chapter Eight. This is the God-shaped-hole experience in which co-researchers with long term contemplative practices frequently began to question the lack of spirituality in their lives.

Spiritual and religious experience was a minor topic covered in the first review of the literature, which covered the areas described in the introduction. In this review I identified a number of theorist–practitioners whose work is examined throughout the project. They are Professor Christopher Chapple, Navin and Pratima Professor of Indic and Comparative Theology, LMU, Los Angeles; Professor Jorge Ferrer, Chair of the East-West Psychology Department, CIIS, San Francisco; Dr Dean Elias and Dr Ken Otter, working in educational leadership in the School of Education, Saint Marys College of California, San Francisco; and Professor James Morley, Professor of Clinical Psychology, Ramapo College, New Jersey.⁴⁹ I was able to conduct interviews with

⁴⁹ Importantly, the ethos of these academics' universities supports their approaches to contemplative education. LMU, founded in Los Angeles in 1911, is a Catholic university rooted in the Jesuit and Marymount educational traditions which are committed to academic excellence, spiritual growth and social justice (LMU n. d. ¶ 1). The CIIS founded by the East-West philosopher Haridas Chauduri promotes integral education, a nonsectarian approach to spirituality, intercultural understanding and harmony, nonsectarian universal religion and creative self-development and self-fulfilment. St Marys' College of California is a Lasallian Catholic liberal arts university, which was founded in 1863 by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of San Francisco. Ramapo College of New Jersey is a public liberal arts college; their curriculum includes the liberal arts and sciences, social sciences, fine and performing arts, and the professional programs. Dr Morley's courses in Yoga psychology and the phenomenology of human development, and his study abroad programs to India, plus a range of yoga classes run by other academics, bring a contemplative orientation to this college.

each of these academics in late 2009, and excerpts from their theoretical work⁵⁰ and these interviews are used throughout this project.

The second stage of the fieldwork produced four central methodological findings. Firstly, the formality of the second stage, which contrasted with the informality of the first, impacted the participant observation in both stages. This can be seen most clearly in the first stage where the informality facilitated faster and deeper contemplative experience for the co-researchers, and accelerated the development of trust between the co-researchers and the researcher. There are a number of possible reasons for this, including the extended time in contemplation that stage one co-researchers had in comparison to those in the second stage of the fieldwork.

Secondly, there was a difference in the way that potential co-researchers were identified in each stage. Initially it was more difficult to access co-researchers in the second stage, which impacted the methods, as the snowballing method had to be adopted. Thirdly, the wider range of co-researchers in the second stage revealed the similarities in many of their experiences, which supported this study's presentation of common stages in learning through contemplation. Lastly, observation at the two fieldwork sites provided insight into the application of contemplative pedagogical practices in higher and adult education. I was able to observe the differences between undergraduate and graduate courses, and the ways that contemplative education is taught in North America, Australia and New Zealand. I also examined the different pedagogies that academics and facilitators used to integrate contemplation into their programs. The range of practices in this relatively small sample, which included contemplative environmental art, philosophy, theology, leadership and psychology, highlights the diversity in contemporary education.⁵¹ A summary of the activities carried out in the second stage is detailed in Appendix 2: Table 2, Overview of activities in stage two of the fieldwork: April –December 2009.

⁵⁰ These include: Christopher Chapple's *Hinduism and ecology: The intersection of earth, sky, and water* (2000), and his *Yoga and the luminous: Pātanjali's spiritual path to freedom* (2008); Jorge Ferrer's *Revisioning transpersonal theory: A participatory vision of human spirituality* (2002); Dean Elias's *It's time to change our minds: An introduction to transformative learning* (1997); and James Morley's *Embodied consciousness in Tantric Yoga and the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty* (2008), and his *Inspiration and expiration: Yoga practice through Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of embodiment* (2001).

⁵¹ It is important to note that this is the variety of disciplines that I explored not the complete range engaging contemplative education.

Overview and insights from the sites of the second stage of the fieldwork
Los Angeles, 7th – 31st October, 2009

The second stage of the fieldwork began in Los Angeles at LMU where I conducted an interview with Professor Chapple who then introduced me to Dr Katherine Harper the head of the Art History department, Dr Judith Scalin the head of the School of Dance, and John Doyle a yoga teacher in the School of Dance. I interviewed each of these academics and spent time in their classes, which led to trust developing between me, the academics and the students. This is an important aspect of the qualitative phenomenological approach taken in this project, as it supports access to participants and the development of empathetic relationships, which can ensure validity (Lyon, et al. 2012).

The fieldwork in Los Angeles and the other sites in the USA differed from the fieldwork in the first stage. Although it did not significantly affect the richness of the data, it did influence the fieldwork process. In the second stage my participant-observer role was less immersive, for despite being an insider and participating in a number of the activities at LMU and Ramapo College, I was not a ‘participant’ or student⁵² in the courses I observed. This meant that it took longer to build trust, and initially demanded that I reflect on and then revise this aspect of my participant-observer role in the USA. Michelle Fine describes these revisions as “working the hyphen” (Fine in Denzin & Lincoln 2005, p. 904), which is the researcher’s reflective navigation of their shifting role through the course of the fieldwork.

In addition to the differences in the participant-observer role between the first and second stages, access to co-researchers was different in the second stage. In the first, all the potential co-researchers were present at the residential retreats, while this was not the case in the USA. Although I had been introduced, via email, to a number of potential co-researchers, I also had to employ snowballing.⁵³ The effect of snowballing can be seen in my relationship with Professor Chapple who not only introduced me to

⁵² I did not participate in the formal courses at LMU or CIIS, but did in the more informal settings of a number of yoga classes: an Eco yoga practice at the Church in Ocean Park, Santa Monica, *Yoga Sūtra Sadhana* the Hill Street Centre, Santa Monica, and activities at the Learning Garden, which is a part of the Venice High School, Los Angeles. The Learning Garden is described on its website as a “model example of how a school garden can transform the lives of students and teachers and the environment of their community.” (<http://www.thelearninggarden.org/aboutus.html>: 1). I also participated in the yoga practices in Dr Morley’s Yoga Psychology course at Ramapo College, New Jersey.

⁵³ Snowballing occurs when a current participant introduces the researcher to other participants.

LMU academics and students but also to members of the LMU Yoga Studies Extension Course,⁵⁴ and a number of his past students. They in turn introduced me to their students who were retirees, young and older professionals (some recovering from illness and in one case a near fatal illness), a graphic designer, lawyer, writer, Hindu scholar, actor, property developer, ex-dancer, doctor and filmmaker.

An interesting phenomenon which arose in the interviewing, though beyond the scope of this current project, was that the co-researchers' teachers provided a snapshot of many of the most influential yoga sages and teachers⁵⁵ of the modern age in the West. It is relevant in this study as the co-researchers' contemplative yogic experiences readily link them with the classical Yoga philosophy supporting this project.

San Francisco, 1st – 6th November, 2009

From Los Angeles I travelled to San Francisco where I spent six days, which meant that I did not have time to conduct participant observation. However, I did interview five academics, Dr Jorge Ferrer and Dr Brendan Collins who teach in the East-West Psychology Department at the CIIS. I then interviewed three academics at Saint Mary's College of California, starting with Dr Dean Elias who is a faculty member in the School of Education, Dr Ken Otter the Director of Leadership Studies, and Dr Kathleen Taylor a Professor in the School of Education. Insights from these interviews appear throughout this project, particularly those relating to the pedagogy of contemplative education.

⁵⁴ Information about Yoga studies at the Center for Religion and Spirituality, LMU, Los Angeles, can be found at, <http://www.lmu.edu/academics/extension/crs/yoga.htm>

⁵⁵ They are, Swami Sivananda Saraswati, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupād, B.K.S. Iyengar, K. Pattabhi Jois and Tirumalai Krishnamacharya. In her *A history of modern yoga* Elizabeth De Michelis (2004) claims that the influence of many of these sages, on what she terms 'modern postural yoga' and 'modern meditational yoga', was significant. Knut Jacobsen (2005) outlines the importance of Bhaktivedānta Prabhupād, who founded the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, and brought *Bhakti Yoga* or the Yoga of devotion to the West. While the teachings of Swami Sivananda Saraswati and Śrīmān T. Krishnamāchārya, whose prominent students were Swami Satyananda Saraswati (Sivananda),⁵⁵ B.K.S. Iyengar and K. Pattabhi Jois "have dominated the global marketplace of yoga with emphasis on physical wellbeing" (Jacobsen 2005, p. 25).

New Jersey, 7th Nov - 19th December, 2009

I spent six weeks at Ramapo College, New Jersey, conducting participant observation in Dr James Morley's second-year Yoga Psychology course (PSYC 220). Ramapo's Department of Psychology's handbook states:

This course will critically review the philosophical psychology of classical Indian yoga. These theories and practices will be discussed in relation to traditional South Indian cultural context of Hindu and Buddhist thought and various schools of Indian philosophy and traditional medicine. This approach will be integrally applied to contemporary clinical theory and practice in psychology. (Ramapo College n.d. ¶ 1)

I met with and conducted interviews with Dr Morley, his students, and two of his colleagues, Dr Kathleen Shannon, who teaches on the first-year Yoga Philosophy program and is an Adjunct Professor in the *First Year Experience* at Ramapo College, and Dr Carol Bowman Assistant Professor of Education and Co-director with Dr Morley on the *South India Study Abroad Program* at Ramapo. I also interviewed a number of yoga practitioners in New York City (NYC).

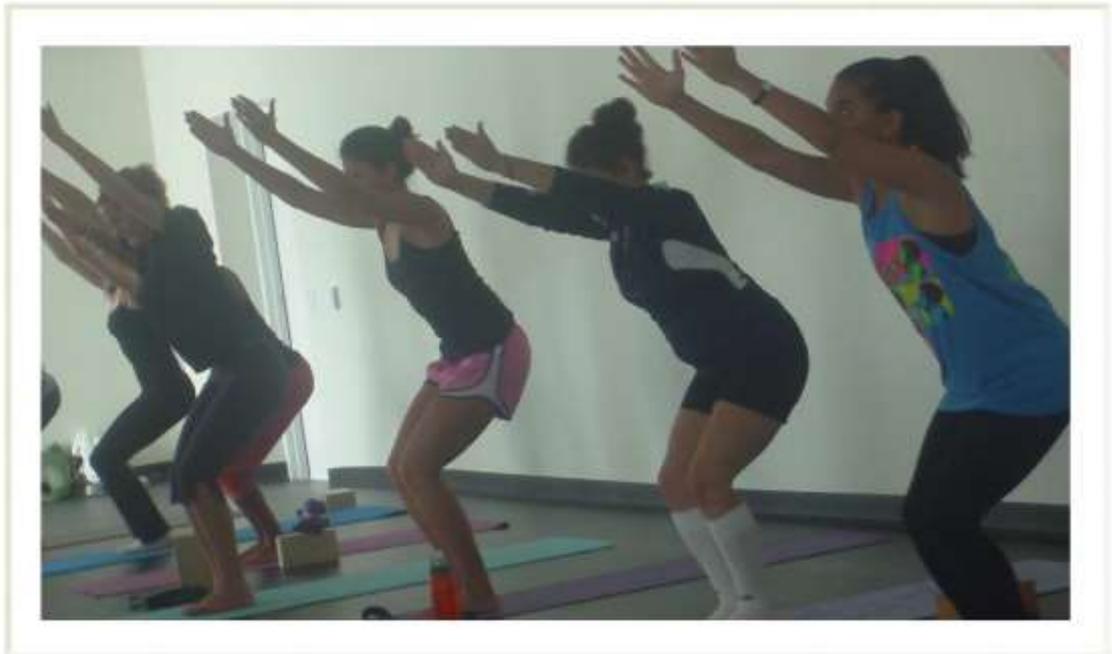
Many of the methodological issues encountered in New Jersey and NYC were similar to those raised earlier, in particular the development of trust with the co-researchers. In the interviews where this was an issue I relied on the general themes and questions that I had developed from Moustakas's (1994) *general interview guide*. Moustakas has formulated seven broad questions that can be used when "the co-researcher's story had not tapped into the experience qualitatively and with sufficient meaning and depth" (Moustakas 1994, p. 116). However, the need for these questions decreased because the Yoga psychology students quickly became familiar with me as I was living on the Ramapo campus, attending twice-weekly sessions of the Yoga psychology course, eating in the student cafeterias, and taking the campus shuttle into the local shopping malls. Patricia Munhall (2007) describes this as 'total immersion', which she suggests is a preferable approach in participant observation.

In addition to these findings, two significant issues arose in New Jersey. The first was the stories of stress and anxiety described by most of the 13 students I spoke to. While stress was an issue for many of the co-researchers it was not mentioned as often as it was at Ramapo. Some of the students described it as incapacitating and associated it with the intense financial and performance pressures they were under. These students' experiences of stress are significant in this project's examination of learning through contemplation, for despite their lack of prior contemplative experience, they all reported a reduction in their stress levels after the Yoga Psychology course.⁵⁶ The second insight relates to Dr Morley's realisation after teaching the Yoga Psychology course for a number of years that as his students' yoga practice improves so do their academic grades.

The challenges and insights from this and all stages of the fieldwork facilitated understandings of first-person contemplative experience, which are developed in the following chapters. The particularities of participant observation in this study necessitated my exploration of the role in detail, and required me to be more flexible as the fieldwork settings changed. Realisations that arose from my navigation of the tensions inherent in the participant-observer role facilitated my development of techniques that supported the growth in trust between me and the co-researchers. I also became aware of the way that my ability to reformulate the participant-observer role, according to demands of the field, impacted trust. Broadly, the insights from the fieldwork supported this project's examination of the ways that the co-researchers learnt through contemplation. They highlighted important aspects and benefits of the phenomenological method, such as the realisation of the embodied nature of the methods, and the impacts on the methods of the different stages of the fieldwork. Importantly, the fieldwork methods revealed a number of shared contemplative experiences across the range of co-researchers, which have provided the framework for schemas of learning in contemplation central to this project.

Images from this stage of the fieldwork follow:

⁵⁶ The relations between contemplation and stress reduction are discussed variously in Chapters Three to Eight.



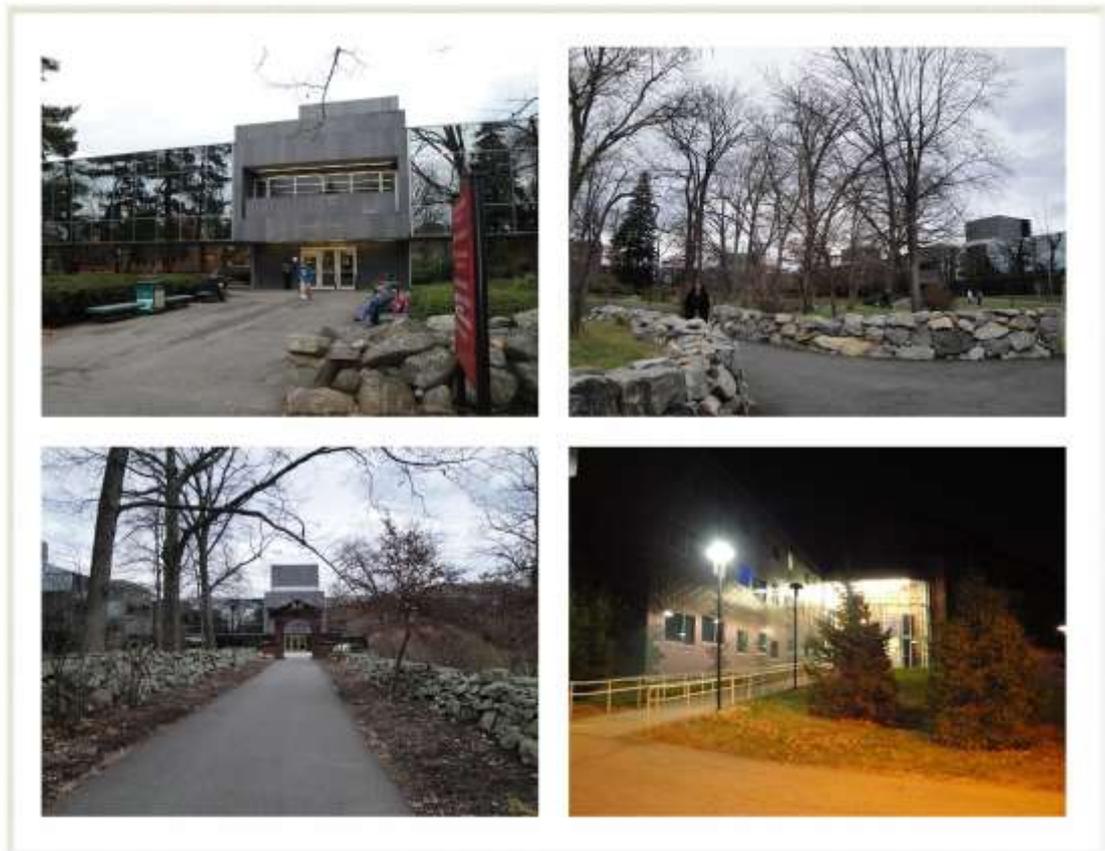
Yoga Psychology Class - Ramapo College, Mahwah, New Jersey, USA, .7th November – 19th December, 2009.



The Loyola Marymount Campus, Los Angeles, California, USA. October 2009.



Yoga Psychology Class - Ramapo College, Mahwah, New Jersey, USA, .7th November – 19th December, 2009.



Ramapo College, Mahwah, New Jersey, USA. 7th November – 19th December, 2009.

Data analysis

This project's data analysis method draws from and adapts Moustakas's approach which he developed by modifying the work of Adrian Van Kaam⁵⁷ and the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen⁵⁸ (Moustakas 1994, p. 121). The system he created from their work comprises three stages, the first, is the 'horizontalizing' of the data, then the clustering of common categories, and lastly the integration of textural and structural descriptions. In reference to his first stage, Moustakas (1994) defines a 'horizon' as the condition that gives phenomena that appear in conscious experience their unique character. The data in this study was horizontalised, though this was the second stage of the data analysis. The first stage, which is also the first deviation from Moustakas's method, was a period of contemplative reflection. In this reflective stage I engaged with a meditative listening to, and scanning of, the whole interview, which I describe as 'being with' the data outside any cognitive appraisal.

In the second stage of the data analysis I identified the 'core' horizons (grounding conditions) or unique qualities of the contemplative state of consciousness. While I horizontalised the co-researchers' interviews I also retained an awareness of the insights gained in the initial reflective stage described above. This approach led to a reflective 'allowing' of themes to arise. The third stage of the data analysis (Moustakas's second) involved developing the primary themes by creating 'meaning units' from the horizontalised statements and 'clustering' them into common categories or themes (Moustakas 1994, p. 118). This was done by, "using phenomenological reflection and imaginative variation...[to construct]...thematic portrayals of the experience" (Moustakas 1994, p. 131). In this project the third stage or clustering of themes contained four phases, which is the second modification of Moustakas's method.

⁵⁷ Van Kaam, A., 1959, 'Phenomenal analysis: Exemplified by a study of the experience of "really feeling understood"', *Journal of Individual Psychology*, 15 (1), 66-72.

Van Kaam, A., 1966, 'Application of the phenomenological method', in Van Kaam, A., *Existential foundations of psychology*, University Press of America, Lanham, MD.

⁵⁸ Stevick, E. L., 1971, 'An empirical investigation of the experience of anger', in A. Giorgi, W. Fischer, & R. Von Eckartsberg (Eds), *Duquesne studies in phenomenological psychology*, vol. 1, pp. 132-148. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

Colaizzi, P. R., 1973, *Reflection and research in psychology*, Kendall/Hunt, Dubuque, IA.

Keen, E., 1975, *Doing research phenomenologically*, Unpublished manuscript, Bucknell University, Lewisburg, PA.

In the first phase nine primary themes were identified. In the second phase, a further refinement occurred in a process that Moustakas describes as developing the ‘textural descriptions’ of the experience. This leads to “structural descriptions and an integration of textures and structures into the meanings and essences of the phenomenon...[that]...are constructed” (Moustakas 1994, pp. 118, 119). In the third phase, two primary themes, the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of the *feeling nexus* process, were identified. They are the focus of the following chapters which contain 16 sub-themes for Chapters Three to Five, while in Chapters Six to Eight these two primary themes are discussed across three sub-theme areas containing 15 minor themes, in addition to 10 separate minor themes. In the fourth phase these sub- and minor themes went through another stage of clustering in which they were amalgamated with others or deleted. The fourth stage of data analysis (Moustakas’s third) involved the integration of textural and structural descriptions. This was done to provide the ‘meanings and essences’ (Moustakas, 1994) of the data that were then applied in the development of the *feeling nexus* paradigm as it is explored through the co-researchers’ reports.

In each of these phases my understanding of the *feeling nexus* advanced. In addition to the *feeling nexus*, two others findings developed through phases three and four of the data analysis. They are my proposition of a *contemplative trajectory* and the schema of pre-predicative and embodied learning that I have termed *learning feelings*. *Learning Feelings* is the phrase I have developed to describe the regular experience of a form of *contemplative synaesthesia* or experience of a gestalt of the somatic, cognitive, affective and transcendent modes of being, or the process of the *feeling nexus*. This phrase *learning feelings* illustrates both the feeling tone of the *feeling nexus*, and how practitioner’s fluency with it can grow.

The open-ended, in-depth interview as a contemplative or mindful practice

In the data analysis stage I had a sense that there was a contemplative dimension to some of the interviews. As I investigated this further and reflected on my application of the *epoché*,⁵⁹ as the first step in the interview process, I began to understand that the interviews I conducted were a form of contemplation or mindfulness. The focused attention they required, which can be understood as the application of the *epoché*

⁵⁹ Moustakas (1994) describes the *epoché* as a clearing of the mind or a form of ‘reflective meditation’.

(bracketing), may suggest that I had entered a neutral or objective state of consciousness that qualitative theorists often critique. As Gadamer claims, it is neither “possible, necessary, nor desirable” for the researcher to put themselves within brackets (Gadamer in Packer 2010, p. 95). However, this is not the case because the form of bracketing I was applying was a “unique sort of philosophical solitude” (Husserl in Moustakas 1994, p. 87), where I was attempting to return to the ‘original nature’ of my contemplative experience (Moustakas 1994). It is this understanding of my focused, subjective attention, as opposed to the removal of personal bias that illustrates my application of the *epoché* in the interviews.

I initially became aware of the interviews as a form of contemplation while making notes about the interview technique alongside comments on their content. Reflecting on these notes I realised that some of them had a particular quality, which I’ll describe using a swimming metaphor. As I listened to the interviews, many appeared to change at a certain point, and the *feeling* of this change was like entering another space, or stepping from the sand into the ocean. It felt like being half in and out of the water, then at times being submerged, of sometimes swimming and feeling the exertion, and at other times floating, but always being enclosed with the co-researcher in a liquid ephemerality, which was contemplative and relational. Further reflection on the process of the interviews led to my realisation that in some of them I had let go of ‘doing the interview’. This letting go was a releasing into the *flow* of the conversation. The moment where I stopped ‘doing’ the interview was when mindfulness occurred and in turn where the data became richly textured. The sense of flow or rhythm in the interviews is a feature of qualitative interviewing. Arlene Fink and Sabine Mertens Oishi (2003), for example, discuss the sense of pace and rhythm in the encounter, while Thomas Lindlof and Bryan Taylor (2010) suggest that there is a ‘natural’ rhythm to an interview (See also DeLyser & Herbert 2010; Marschan-Piekkari & Welch 2004; May 2002).

My understanding of the contemplative aspect of the interviews continued to develop through the data analysis. In my notes on the interview with Jason, a yoga teacher in Los Angeles, I describe parts of the interview ‘feeling’ as though we were ‘speaking the same conversation’. What is important here is that reading the interview may not have revealed more than the usual development of empathy between two people who have

similar interests and experiences. However, when I listened to it I *felt* something change in the tone of our voices. I now realise that this was the point where my intense focus, or moment-to-moment mindful attention, led to the interview becoming a contemplative practice. By listening to them I could *feel-hear* the shift in consciousness, which I describe as ‘listening at another level’.

In a search of the literature⁶⁰ I didn’t find a discussion of contemplative interviewing, though in his examination of data collection and fieldwork strategies Michael Patton (2002) alludes to the potential for contemplative interviews. He links what he terms ‘empathic neutrality’ and ‘mindfulness’, which creates a ‘vicarious’ understanding that is achieved by “showing openness, sensitivity, respect, awareness, and responsiveness; in observation it means being fully present (mindfulness)” (Patton 2002, p. 40). Patton doesn’t expand on his proposition of being ‘fully present’ in an interview, though a contemplative dimension in interviewing is mentioned in the qualitative educational research of Cheryl Glen and her colleagues (2011). While they do not directly outline a contemplative form of interviewing, they do introduce the concepts of ‘silence as praxis’ and ‘meditative silences’ in interviews. These indirect propositions of mindful interviewing and the understanding of contemplative interviewing, outlined here, is important, as the contemplative exchange that occurred in many of the fieldwork interviews led to significant insights about the foundations of learning through contemplation.

In summary

This chapter’s exploration of the design and methods used in this project described the two-stage fieldwork and the reasons for the choice of fieldwork sites. It introduced Max van Manen’s phenomenological approach (1990), defined Clark Moustakas’s (1994) phenomenological method, and outlined how it was customised to account for the variances of contemplative states of consciousness. In the chapter’s examination of the

⁶⁰ After a review of the literature it appears that qualitative interviewing as a contemplative practice has not been critiqued, which has resulted in the absence of critical reflection in this section. Apart from brief allusions to it by Patton (2002) and Glen et al. (2011), I have found no direct discussion of it, though this does not mean that it doesn’t exist. However, it was so apparent in the interviews I conducted that it is important to expand on it here using insights from my data analysis notes. I am also aware, particularly with reference to Moustakas’s use of the *epoché*, that something similar to my understanding of contemplative interviews may be being discussed using different terminology.

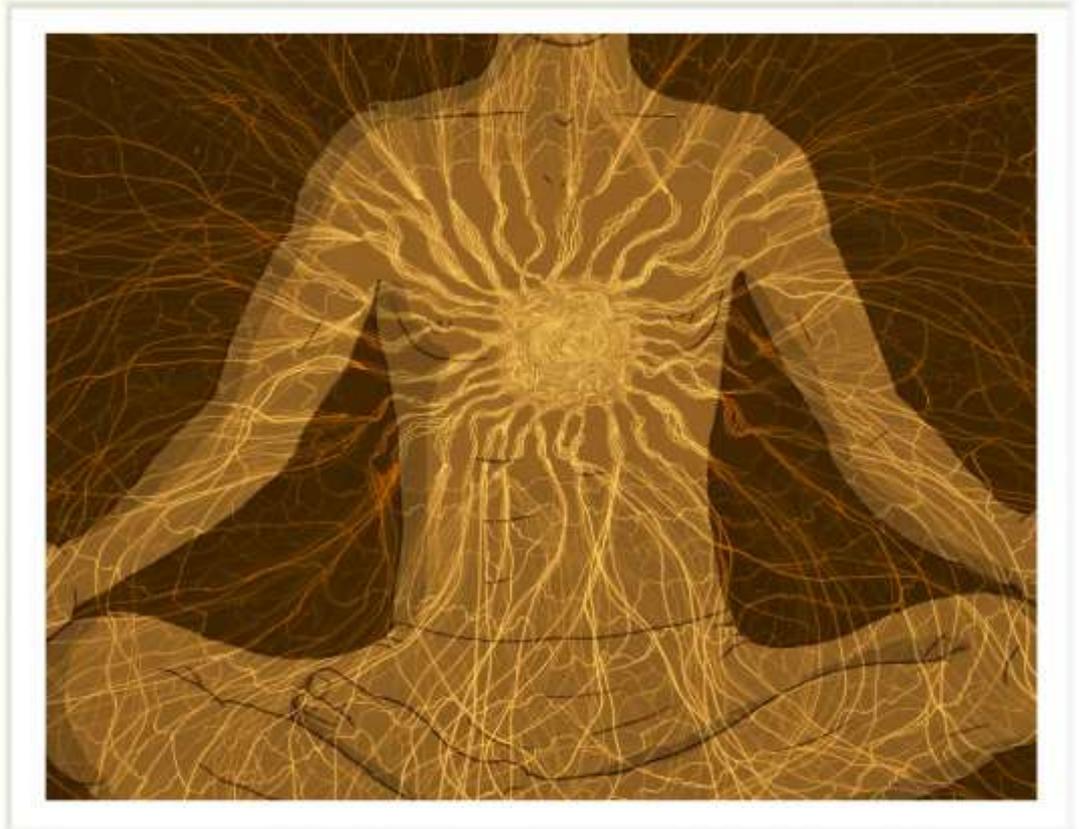
fieldwork it rationalised the need for a wide range of co-researchers, and described how the use of its methods provided insight into the ways that the co-researchers learnt through contemplation.

This chapter's focus on the phenomenological methods, specifically developed to engage the contemplative state of consciousness, demonstrated how they revealed their embodied nature. It emphasised the role of the insider researcher, particularly with regard to the impact of the development of trust, the challenges of participant observation, the importance of the relationship between the researcher and co-researcher and the ways that they co-create the research.

The examination of this methodological approach challenged positivist assumptions about objectivity, primarily by acknowledging the inevitability and necessity of the intersection of the researcher and participant (Hitchcock & Hughes 1995), emphasising the proposition that complete objectivity is “unobtainable and that value-free knowledge does not exist” (Hitchcock & Hughes 1995, p. 55). I believe that the advantages of my insider status in each stage of the project outweighed any suggested disadvantages. The most obvious benefit was the ready rapport which developed between me and many of the co-researchers because we ‘spoke the same language’. That is, we understood, through our contemplative experience, the gaps in language that can be a consequence of recounting contemplative experience. Also, we filled in these gaps with descriptions of the *feelings* that need to be *felt* to understand contemplative experience.

The advantage of my insider status in the fieldwork can also be seen in the data analysis stage where I could more readily identify impacts of contemplation and descriptions of *learning feelings*. Being an insider not only provided the necessary levels of empathy and trust, it also enabled the formulation of the *feeling nexus* process, which I don't believe I could have done without experiencing this *contemplative synaesthesia* first. This critical examination of the methodology illustrates how the application of phenomenological participant observation, open-ended interviewing, data analysis and writing up resulted in the unique contributions of this project. The following chapter explores this study's understanding of an ecological body.

Chapter Two: The Ecological Body



Cameron Beau Wylie Foster, 2013

I think all of the classes here at Ramapo should be taught that way – the teacher should lecture and then we should all do yoga for half an hour you’d stay in your mind...[we laugh]...I think it helps you stay in your mind, because you know your mind is not supposed to wander to other places when you’re doing yoga. When you’ve been sitting and talking about a particular *sutra* – then as you do the body movements it’s in there and it’s going through you, and you’re still thinking about it so you can think about it in terms of your own muscles and bones and tissues you know. It’s really getting ingrained. (Interview with Casey, 12th November 2009)

Casey’s understanding of the intersection of the somatic and cognitive, described above, introduces a body intimately entwined in the learning process. For her, the yoga practices in the Yoga Psychology course at Ramapo College were integral to her learning because they provided a somatic entry point to the acquisition of knowledge. As she said earlier in the interview, the yoga practices “kind of put it into you” (ibid.). Somatic engagement in learning through contemplation was often reported by many of the co-researchers, and frequently as the first stage in a trajectory through contemplation, which is discussed in the following three chapters. This understanding of a body that is permeable, or interwoven through its contexts, is fundamental here, as it is required to *feel* the *feeling nexus*, the hypothetical mechanism of change I explore throughout this project. This chapter’s development of the interrelational body supports the project’s examination of the relations between the ecological body, contemplation, and learning.

The investigation of these relations starts with the co-researchers’ reports of the positive changes that they experienced through contemplation, which often began with a return to their bodies. This shift from feeling disembodied to embodied began in a state that Jorge Ferrer termed “working from the head up” (Interview, 5th November, 2009). It then moved to what Catherine, a yoga teacher in Los Angeles, described as her contemplative practice, somehow “bringing your sense of yourself into your body” (Interview, 12th October, 2009). While the co-researchers frequently reported their re-establishment of a somatic awareness, what they recovered is highly contested. This project acknowledges these multiple conceptions of bodily being but develops a specific ecological understanding of the body in an exchange with phenomenology, Yoga

philosophy, neurophenomenology and related sciences. They have been brought into dialogue because their definitions of an interrelational body support this project's view of it as a conduit to experience of the interrelational *feeling nexus* process.

Understandings of the ecological body are introduced in an examination of Merleau-Ponty's concepts of *flesh* and the *chiasm*. These are then related to Yoga's development of an ecological body, founded on the conception of *Brahman* (the omnipresent divine) and the elemental interweaving processes of the *gunas*. The comparison of Yoga and phenomenology's understandings of an interrelational body conclude with a review of their shared conceptions of a witness consciousness. This philosophical examination of the ecological body is supported with neurophenomenological findings related to intermeshing corporeal systems, and the suggestion of a contemplative consciousness. Following this, the links between the *feeling nexus* and the ecological body are posited through their corresponding interrelational forms. The chapter ends with a critical examination of the place of this body in curriculum development. It emphasises the importance of acknowledging and engaging the somatic in education, and provides suggestions for contemplative pedagogy.

The ecological or interrelational

This project's interpretation of ecology draws from Daniel White's (1998) 'postmodern ecology', which combines phenomenology and ecology. White describes this ecology as "the experience of selfhood, of human identity with the circular, communicative processes of the biosphere" (White 1998, p.78). He links phenomenology and ecology in this definition because, as he asserts, phenomenology is the "most cogent philosophical examination of subjective experience" (ibid.), while ecology is the "most comprehensive examination of the objective world around us on Earth" (ibid.). White's correlation of phenomenology and ecology is not only methodologically congruent in this project, it also acknowledges the relativistic approach underpinning this study, and the shared relativism of phenomenology and ecology. For phenomenology, this is its exploration of the "relationality of the human experiencer to the field of experience" (Ihde 1990, p. 25) and for ecology, it's the "study of organisms in relation to their environment" (ibid.).

The notion of ecology used here is also derived from ecology as it was originally developed in the biological sciences.⁶¹ This ecology, or bionomics, studies the interrelationality of living organisms with their environment, and views all organisms and the living, non-living, chemical and physical factors of the environments they inhabit as interconnected through complex systems of nutrient and energy (communication) exchange. The bionomic understanding of universal interconnected and interpenetrating systems illustrates the interrelational *feeling nexus* imbedded in an elemental ecological substrate.

The interrelational in phenomenology: *Flesh and the chiasm*

Ecological or interrelational experience often began for the co-researchers in their contemplative encounter with their body. These events provided them with immersive and integrative experience, which Heather, a yoga student in Los Angeles, described as her yoga practice, “integrating the person that I was and the kinds of things I was attracted to, which were missing each other, and I think yoga somehow helps bring these things together” (Interview, 24th October, 2009). While Angelica, a yoga teacher in Los Angeles, spoke of an integrative force in her yoga classes, “it makes me happy at the end of class when the *om* is more resonant. Yes, you can feel that can’t you? Sometimes I don’t really know how to control it but I just feel that everyone is in sync” (Interview, 29th October, 2009). These interrelational somatic experiences initiate, I suggest, the positive results from contemplative education that many of the co-researchers described.

⁶¹ Although biological science is founded on complex, bounded taxonomies of the natural world, it was the direct observation of Nature, and some of the primary biological principles such as homeostasis (the conception of interrelated cycles in living systems that create a dynamic equilibrium), and the systematic (the study of relationships between multiple speciation events) that led a number of biologists to the science of ecology. These biological ecologists confirmed that organisms do not exist separately as the taxonomies they studied might have suggested, but that they are mutually dependent. They conceptualised the living, non-living, chemical and physical factors of the environments as one biological environment, which they termed ‘ecosystem’. The pivotal concept underlying the ecosystem theory lies in the latter part of the term, for these biological ‘wholes’ are made up of interpenetrating, interdependent ‘systems’.

Phenomenology's first-person^{62,63} focus provides a conceptual platform for the ecological body, particularly Merleau-Ponty's development of a foundational intersubjective reality, engaged through first-person experience. Merleau-Ponty saw this experience as "constitutive of perception...prior to...self-objectification in reflection" (Carman 2008, p.96). This fundamental engagement is presented in his work as a coherent means to know *flesh*. The elemental relationality and intersubjectivity (ecology) of *flesh* is not an 'element', like earth, air, fire, and water, not psychic or matter, but a "tissue that lines, sustains and nourishes everything animate and inanimate" (Merleau-Ponty 1968, p. 131). *Flesh* is progenitive, immanent and the "formative medium of the subject and object" (Cataldi 1993, p. 60). Its procreative force is caused by a continuous process in which it folds on and over itself, 'labouring' on itself, hollowing itself out and coiling over until it creates an 'other' side to itself (ibid.). This activity or *écart* (a stepping aside) allows it to become self-regarding, so enabling perceptibility to originate in *flesh*.

Perception originates along the outer edges of *flesh* at the ridge where it touches 'perceptible-percipients', or that which perceives and that which is perceived. Merleau-Ponty's establishment of this border enables *flesh* to expand the body beyond the edge of its skin, where it is both "'subject' and 'object' both existence and essence" (Merleau-Ponty 1968, p. 130). This is something that Mike at LMU discovered through the deep focus of contemplation, which he described as going out or into his body in a way that he had never felt it before, "feeling like you go somewhere else" (Interview, 21st October, 2009). This state beyond the everyday discursive consciousness allowed him to enter the interrelational space of *flesh*, where he could *feel* its interrelational forms and processes. This immersive experience is dependent on *chiasms*, which are

⁶² First person here relates to the way it is understood in sciences of consciousness, which borrow from narrative studies. Narrative studies designate first-person narrative as speaking from the narrator's point of view using 'I' or 'we'. Second person is where the narrator refers to the reader as 'you', making them one of the characters. Third person refers to the characters as 'he', 'she', 'it' or 'they', thereby making the narrator invisible. Sciences of consciousness use the first person in a similar way to signify the experiential or subjective dimension of consciousness (Zahavi 2002), which Varela and Shear (1999(a)) term 'lived experience'. The second person is thought of as an intermediate or mediating position between first and third person, and third person as objective, rational, empirically based description or descriptive experience (Varela & Shear 1999(a)).

⁶³ The aim, in phenomenology, to gain a first-person perspective is based on its drive to provide a rigorous, first-person description of pre-theoretical experience (Glotzbach & Heft 1982, p. 114). This can be seen in Merleau-Ponty's directive for phenomenology, in which he calls for the "reawakening [of] the basic experience of the world, of which science is the second-order expression" (Merleau-Ponty 1945, 1962, p. ix).

points of intersection where both sides of bodily being, self/world, are brought into relationship. The intertwining (*entrelacs*) or *chiasm* is a primal interrelation, pre-existing in the perceptible and revealed through the act of perceiving. It is a ‘latency’ that Merleau-Ponty found in ‘the look’, which, “envelops, palpates, espouses the visible things. As though it were in a relation of pre-established harmony with them, as though it knew them before knowing them” (Merleau-Ponty 1968, p.133).

In addition, the activities of *flesh* are framed by a force of attraction, as the body remains unified even though it comprises two ‘leaves’ – the sensing and sensed. These two aspects, or leaves of the body,⁶⁴ remain in communion through the *chiasm* as it is a “medium of exchange...[that]...grounds Merleau-Ponty’s notion of intercorporeality” (Cataldi 1993, p. 69). It can be suggested that the chiasmic exchange was at work for Casey, a teaching assistant in Morley’s Yoga Psychology course, when she described how, “going into your body helps you stay in your mind” (Interview, 12th November, 2009). This communication between mind and body illustrates the relations between the two leaves of the body, which remain concurrently separate and interconnected through their shared origins, and the constant enfolding or exchanges in the fission of the drawing in and pulling away. It is in these exchanges that the assimilated object becomes the consciousness of itself, while the process of perception reverses to become a *visible* or object. The enfolding interrelational drives of *flesh* are important in this project because they illustrate the forces at work in the ecological body. These are forces such as the interrelational elemental form and processes of the *feeling nexus*, and the pre-existent ground that it resides in.

The ecological body and witness consciousness

The interrelationality of body being developed by Merleau-Ponty can be found in Yoga through its pantheism, practices, ethics and its proposition of a witness consciousness. The ecological in Yoga starts with its pantheistic conception of Brahman, the divine absolute that pervades all reality and exists in humans as their essential selves or their

⁶⁴ It is important to note that these are not two separate aspects, for as Merleau-Ponty outlines, “One should not even say,...that the body is made up of two leaves, of which the one, that of the ‘sensible’ is bound up with the rest of the world...To speak of leaves or of layers is still to flatten and to juxtapose, under the reflective gaze, what coexists in the living and upright body. If one wants metaphors, it would be better to say that the body sensed and the body sentient are as the obverse and the reverse, or again, as two segments of one sole circular course” (Merleau-Ponty 1968, pp. 137,138).

(*ātman*) (Feuerstein 1990). *Brahman* is formless but inherent in all form, linking the living (biotic), non-living (abiotic) and transcendent components of the universe. *Brahman* is expressed through the interactions (*saṃyoga*) of Yoga's two primordial aspects, *puruṣa* (male, transcendental consciousness), and *prakṛti* (female, Nature). *Puruṣa* in *prakṛti* triggers the unfolding of phenomenal existence through the interplay of the *guṇas*,⁶⁵ the three primary constituents of reality. Once the *guṇas* arise out of the play of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* their constant intertwining provides the ecological process that “weaves the entire pattern of cosmic existence” (Feuerstein 1990, p. 264). Their interweaving occurs in four interrelated levels of existence, which are the ‘unmanifest’ (*aliṅga*), the ‘designator’ (*liṅga-mātra*), the ‘unparticularized’ (*aviśeṣa*) and the ‘particularized’ (*viśeṣa*) (Whicher 1998(a), p. 65). The constant combining, unravelling and recombining of the *guṇas*, in these levels, creates a vast inter-dimensional systemic patterning that is inherent in the universe as its ecological fundament.

Yogic practices can lead to the realisation of this ubiquitous ecology, which is *Brahman*, when the adherent experiences “the cosmic homology between the body and the world” (Morley 2001, p. 75), or the mirroring of *Brahman* (macrocosm) in the individual (microcosm). Often this starts with somatic focus through the *āsana* or postures and/or *prāṇāyāma*, which is a breath control practice. When describing the results of her yoga practice, Angelina spoke of experiencing a ‘vastness’ and that, “somehow the yoga brought that back – the connection with everything...with something bigger” (Interview, 29th October, 2009).

Both *āsana* and *prāṇāyāma* can support practitioners’ growing awareness of the ecology of themselves. For as they develop more subtle somatic focus in these practices, the “boundaries between body and environment become increasingly blurred, and the primordial body is coextensive with the universe itself” (Feuerstein 1998, p. 143). Agnes identified something similar with her yoga students, describing it as them being in ‘the zone’:

⁶⁵ The three *guṇas* (strands), which are a triad of primal forces are: *tamas* (darkness), the psychocosmic principal of inertia, (Feuerstein 1990, p. 362); *rajas*, the animating or dynamic principle; and *sattva* (beingness), “*sattva* is the psychocosmic principle of lucid or sheer existence” (Feuerstein 1990 p. 315). While these three elemental forces have different qualities, they each contain the binding force that causes the endless conjunctions they perform.

I always teach them a lot of breathing and meditation, actually very little movement because they have a lot of complications, and at the end we do *om*. First silently and they're focusing at a point between the eyebrows, and then we actually do it out loud, if they want to. Most of them are belting it out and they're great, and when they open their eyes they're just all in the zone and they're thanking me – so I know that something changes. (Interview, 9th October, 2009)

The second aspect of Yoga's ecology can be seen and applied through its ethics. These are outlined in the eight-fold or eight-limbed Yoga path⁶⁶ taught by the sage Patanjali. This starts with Yoga's ethical principles, which are divided equally between the *Yamas* and *Niyamas*,⁶⁷ the first two limbs of Yoga. In Yogic terms the maintenance of the *Yamas* and *Niyamas* helps the practitioner to 'refine' their behaviour by assisting them to develop their ability to reflect on their actions. It enables them to "watch their own ecology – [to see] how it connects, disconnects, inhales and exhales, falls apart, rights itself...[to]...come to see a life that exists in a much wider field than the purely personal" (Stone & Iyengar 2009, pp.14, 15). This enables them to perceive the foundations of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* and the intertwining or ecology of these elemental forces within, between and outside of themselves.

Perception of these ecological processes and fields is mediated by an inherent witness consciousness (*sākṣin*), described by Morley in our interview as "that place in all of us that isn't changing" (Interview, 19th November, 2009). The co-researchers' encounters with the witness facilitated their immersion in the ecologies or interrelational aspects of themselves and an elemental field of interrelationality. The phenomenologist and Vedantic philosopher Bina Gupta (1998) suggests that the witness "reveals the ground of the empirical world and the ground of the notion of the 'I', and bridges the gap between the metaphysically real and the empirical" (p. 4). She finds something similar

⁶⁶ The eight limbs of the Yogic path as taught by Patanjali are: 1) Five *yamas* (principles or moral code), 2) five *niyama* (restraints or personal disciplines), 3) *āsana* (yoga postures or poses), 4) *prāṇāyāma* (breath control), 5) *pratyāhāra* (withdrawal of the sense), 6) *dhāraṇā* (concentration on an object), 7) *dhyāna* (meditation), and 8) *samādhi* (ecstasy or enstasy) (Yogapoint 2010 and Feuerstein 1990).

⁶⁷ In the *Yoga Sūtra* II.30 the five *Yamas* (observances or ethical standards) are: non-harming (*ahiṃsā*), truthfulness (*satya*), non-stealing (*asteya*), chastity (*brahmacarya*) and greedlessness (*aparigraha*) (Feuerstein 1990, p. 410). The five *Niyamas* (restraints or self-discipline) described in *Yoga Sūtra* II.32 consist of: purity (*śauca*), contentment (*saṃtoṣa*), asceticism (*tapas*), study (*svādhyāya*) and devotion to God (*īśvara-praṇidhāna*) (Feuerstein 1990, p. 241).

in Husserl's development of the phenomenological attitude, which requires a splitting of the ego into the 'naively interested Ego' and a 'disinterested on-looker', with the latter resembling the *sākṣin* (Gupta 1998). The bridging of pre-predicative and cognitive experience in contemplation by the witness facilitates the translation of contemplative pre-predicative experience into new cognitive meanings.

In his phenomenological investigation of embodiment Donn Welton (1999(b)) alludes to the presence of the witness when he asks, "how, in our awareness of things...[do]...we come to experience the lived-body as experiencing" (p. 45). He turns to Husserl's proposition that touching is reflexive, or that in touching we become aware of being touched. In his development of this theme, Husserl created the term *Empfindnisse* (a lived experience), or the particular "sensorial events that offer the body as lived to itself in the very process of being offered to the world" (ibid.). This moment of being offered to the world can be understood as the 'space' of the witness or *sākṣin*.

In Advaita Vedānta⁶⁸ the witness appears in the moment of changing from one situation to the next. It is here that the witness or 'identical element' "persists in the interval of time" (Bagchi 1992, p. 88), where it retains a fraction of the past that can then be compared to the present to reorient the practitioner. Kalyan Bagchi (1992) suggests that because the element that remains is identical in each moment, it must be the transcendental 'I' or witness. He proposes that this inherent transcendental subjectivity passes through cognitive, sensory/bodily phases, moving from non-dual, non-relational states to a "progressive entanglement with the objects transcendent to it until it emerges as the enworlded subjectivity in all its completeness" (ibid.). Bagchi's description of the inherence of the witness is important in this project, because its presence in each stage of the *contemplative trajectory* facilitates the apperception⁶⁹ of the *feeling nexus*.

The witness consciousness, which is termed 'metacognition' by the psychologist and contemplative scholar Tobin Hart, is, he claims, a significant component of contemplation, and a valuable outcome of contemplative education (Hart 2008, p. 247).

⁶⁸ In classical *Advaita Vedānta* (non-dual end of the *Vedas*) the practical application of the witness experience is often described as *Jñāna Yoga* or the Yoga of knowledge or wisdom, and in this sense it can be connected to Yoga philosophy.

⁶⁹ I use the term 'apperception' in the epistemological sense to mean the introspective or reflective apprehension by the mind of its own inner states (Runes 1960).

He observes that metacognition can provide the student with the space to reflect on actions and outcomes, which can then lead to their ability to interrupt “automatic patterns of conditioned thinking, sensation and behaviour” (Varela et al. in Hart 2008, p. 244). Continued reflective or metacognitive experience supports students’ development of conceptual flexibility, which gives them the ability to arrest negative thought patterns, and to question theirs and others’ actions (Hart 2008).

Hart supports these suggestions with recent neurobiological and meditation research which is revealing the physiological substrate of metacognition. This research is showing that meditation lowers students’ reactivity, which can have positive outcomes in educational settings. As Hart claims, “[i]mpulse control problems, distractibility...violence on the playground, inability to sustain attention, frustration, tolerance, and distractibility are all affected by this capacity” (Hart 2008, p. 244). These benefits of engagement with metacognition, the witness or *sākṣin*, are discussed in more detail in Chapter Five because it is an important aspect of the last stage of the trajectory through contemplation, while the ecologies of *Brahman* and the *guṇas* are further elaborated in the following chapters.

The permeability or interrelationality provided both by Brahman’s interweaving of creation in Yoga and Merleau-Ponty’s *flesh* ontology illustrate the ecological presence in this study. This ubiquitous, inter-dimensional intertwining, as both substrate and the process of the *feeling nexus*, provides for their mutual interpenetration. This in turn underlies the co-researchers’ experiences of the synaesthetic blending of the somatic, affective, cognitive and transcendent.

Entwining in neuroanatomy

Neuroanatomy,⁷⁰ neuroendocrinology,⁷¹ psychoneuroimmunology (PNI),⁷² psychosomatology,⁷³ and associated sciences’ depiction of the body as the somatic site

⁷⁰ Neuroanatomy is the study of the anatomy and organisation of the nervous system.

⁷¹ Neuroendocrinology is the study of the interactions between the nervous and endocrine systems.

⁷² PNI is the study of the interactions between psychological processes and the nervous and immune systems of the body. It initially detailed the links between mind and body through research into the mechanisms that create brain immunity effects, which PNI termed the ‘immune-brain loop’. Since this early research, PNI has also shown that the nervous and immune systems interact at different biological levels.

of systemic processes is analogous with the *feeling nexus* and the phenomenological and Yogic models described earlier. These interdisciplinary sciences depict a body that is not a “contestant amidst flux but...an epitome of that flux” (Frank in Csordas 1994, p. 2). They illustrate how this body makes and is made by this flux through complex interactions between intertwining physiological systems, and so “undermine the traditional Cartesian distinction between mind and body” (Carey 2000, p. 25). The discovery by these interdisciplinary sciences of molecular interrelational communication systems intersecting the body illustrates an interrelationality similar to Merleau-Ponty’s *flesh*.

In the interdisciplinary science of psychosomatology this interrelationality is demonstrated through the interactions between individuals’ “internal (genetic, neuroendocrine, immunological, etc.) and external memory and communication systems (societal, cultural, psychosocial etc.)” (Sivik & Schoenfeld 2006). Psychosomatology uses the analogy of language to describe these interrelated systems, suggesting that there are continuous exchanges of information happening in every cell of the body, with peptides and electromagnetic impulses acting as a biochemical alphabet, which founds the ‘language’ used in the psycho-neuro-endocrino-immunological (PNEI) system (Sivik & Schoenfeld 2006). Specific physiological activities within these systems are the focus of a wide range of research in neurophenomenological and associated sciences, which are introduced here through a neurophenomenological project that illustrates the systemic interrelationality of the body.

There is an area of consciousness research studying brain activity, which unlike previous research that sought localised activity in the brain, suggests that consciousness arises when different regions in the brain link or network simultaneously. An example of this research can be found in Francesco Varela and Evan Thompson’s (2001) neurophenomenological research where they propose an ‘enactive’ or ‘radial embodiment’ approach to the study of consciousness in cognitive science. This approach understands neural substrates of consciousness as “large-scale, emergent and transient dynamical patterns of brain activity” (Varela & Thompson 2001, p. 418).

⁷³ Psychosomatology, which developed out of interdisciplinary exchanges between psychoanalysis and medical science, is the “integrative study of the relationship between all the communication and memory systems of the human organism” (Sivik et al. 2002, p. 7).

These neurological systems reveal brain-body-mind fields that counter past assumptions of a “one-way causal-explanatory relationship between internal neural representational systems” (ibid.). They do this by hypothesising ‘two-way’ or interrelational processes between embodied conscious states and neuronal activity.

Previously it was thought that the occurrence of internal neural events led (one-way) out to conscious experience. However, Varela and Thompson insist that cognitive acts are founded on “the transient integration of numerous, widely distributed constantly interacting areas of the brain” (2001, p. 218). This can be seen generally in the areas of brain science investigating the synchronicity of brain waves or oscillations, and specifically in findings related to phase-locking and short- and wide-range synchronisation of brain oscillations.

Varela and Thompson (2001) assert that an important issue regarding research in this area is that it has until recently focused on short-range synchronies between adjacent areas in the brain. In these areas, precise phase-locking of a wide range of oscillations in the *theta* and *gamma* range can enter into precise synchrony over short periods of time. The dominance of results from this research has meant, they contend, that wider-range synchronisation has been absent from this area of brain science. This was until wide-range synchronisations between separate parts of the brain were found, which Varela and Thompson outline through selection task studies. This research shows that the initial gamma activity found in the fronto-temporal regions of the brain was followed by a period of a loss of synchronisation (phase scattering), and then a second period of synchrony. From this and other experiments they propose that phase synchrony not only aids sensory attributes but:

the overall integration of all the dimensions of a cognitive act, including associative memory, emotional tone and motor planning. This evidence suggests that the best opportunity for understanding the neural basis of consciousness is likely to be at the level of ‘dynamical brain signatures’ (large-scale dynamical patterns of activity over multiple frequency bands) rather than the structural level of specific circuits or classes of neurons. (Varela & Thompson 2001, p. 419)

Thompson and Varela not only conceptualise the brain as a dynamic structure of interrelational communication systems, they also show that it moves beyond its physiology.

Contemplation and the ecological body

The deep focus of contemplative states draws the practitioner into their body in a way that enables their apperception of it as ecological or intermeshed with its contexts. This experience is, I propose, what allows them to *feel* the correspondence between the ecological form of their body and the *feeling nexus*. It can be understood as a form of entrainment like the *odd sympathy effect* that occurs when the motion of two adjoining pendulums synchronise. In this case, when the practitioner is led by contemplation into relationship with the *feeling nexus* it entrains their interrelational potential, which can then produce the integration and balance that founds learning through contemplation.

Contemplative consciousness

This project has developed a specific understanding of contemplative consciousness,⁷⁴ which is the state that enables its role in this entraining process, and the *feeling* of the *feeling nexus* that can occur in contemplation. This conception of consciousness is different from our everyday state of consciousness which is tied to sensory perception and known through the objects of consciousness. In contrast, contemplative consciousness is a form of consciousness that is unbounded and content-less, a state that the philosopher Wolfgang Fasching (2008) describes as a pervasive continuous potential.

In his *Consciousness, self-consciousness, and meditation*, Fasching (2008) correlates phenomenology, Yoga, Buddhist philosophy and cognitive science to define

⁷⁴ This understanding of reflective or contemplative consciousness is drawn from Fasching's (2008) work in this area and supported by related phenomenological and Yogic thought. Although there may appear to be links with the Kantian proposition of the non-cognitive nature of aesthetic contemplative reflection, what differentiates contemplative consciousness, aside from its applications beyond the aesthetic, are the intentional practices used to attain it. In addition, contemplation is not a form of 'disinterested awareness' that contains no 'fragments' of knowledge (McCloskey 1987, p. 42). Rather, it is a clear and sharply focused state framed by pre-predicative and somatic knowing. It is beyond the scope of this project to provide a detailed analysis of the differences between Kantian and contemplative consciousness, though important to indicate central aspects that differentiate them.

contemplative consciousness. He starts by separating self-consciousness from consciousness, then distinguishes between two aspects of self-consciousness, firstly, self-identified experiences and secondly, the “self-presence of experiencing itself” (p. 464). He suggests that contemplative practices and in particular non-ideational meditation can inhibit the first, while allowing the second to take precedence. It is this second form, the ‘self-presence of experiencing itself’, that I propose is contemplative consciousness. Morley described this state of consciousness as direct or apodictic experience in which “the distinction between inside and outside collapse” (Interview, 19th November, 2009). In detailing her meditation experience Eunice, a yoga teacher in Los Angeles, distinguished contemplative consciousness from everyday consciousness, “you spend most of your time, for lack of a better phrase, in an incoherent state, but when you do these practices you spend more of your time in coherent states” (Interview, 22nd October, 2009).

Fasching claims that the contemplative state of consciousness is not a “phenomenon among phenomena but the taking place of the phenomenality of phenomena” (2008, p. 467). He links this consciousness with contemplation by suggesting that it is a practice which can lead to the realisation of the ‘phenomenality’ of phenomena. He describes contemplation as a state of ‘just being-there’ through which the practitioner can experience themselves as the “very being-there” (Fasching 2008, p. 470), as the “becoming conscious of consciousness itself” (Fasching 2008, p. 464). He is saying that when the contemplative practitioner is no longer occupied with the awareness of objects of consciousness, they can become conscious of consciousness itself. They are aware of phenomenality as continuous and inherent “present to ourselves in everything that is present” (Fasching 2008, p. 476). This is not an ephemeral state or object that can only be experienced by the practitioner but it is the “very ‘seeing’ itself” (Fasching 2008, p. 468).

This results in the adherent’s experience of the permeability or dissolving of the boundaries between themselves as the meditation subject, the meditation object and their shared contexts. They then experience themselves in and as the state of interrelationality – as the ecology of subject, object and context. Fasching concludes this is not a state that is gained or:

produced, it is not an act...for it is the very being of each and every act. It is always there. So the task of meditative self-realisation is not to gain something new...Rather, the meditative movement is one of removing what veils what is always already there without ever being an object. (2008, p. 476)

Phenomenological and Yogic understandings of contemplative consciousness

Fasching's development of consciousness as the awareness of the process of consciousness itself is similar to a phenomenological conception of consciousness that the philosopher Mark Rowlands outlines. Although Rowlands (2009) does not reference contemplation, he does propose that one can only gain an understanding of this consciousness by undergoing it from the 'inside'. He distinguishes this phenomenological view from recent scientific and philosophical critiques of consciousness research, which are based on first- and third-person investigations of the 'objects' of consciousness, such as neural processes. Rowland's phenomenological research adopts a first-person method and understands that when approached from the 'inside', consciousness is not an object revealed by the *natural attitude*⁷⁵ but the attitude itself. As Rowlands explains, "consciousness consists [also] in the adopting of the attitude from which it – among other things – can appear as a collection of conscious items" (2009, p. 87). This shift from the objects of consciousness to 'consciousness itself' is similar to Fasching's approach.

The conception of consciousness that arises out of the correlation of Rowland's phenomenological consciousness and Fasching's meditative consciousness-as-such parallels Yoga's understanding of consciousness. Specifically, all three are forms free

⁷⁵ An understanding of the natural attitude (*die natürliche Einstellung*) in phenomenology starts with the conception of 'attitude' as a general manner, or way that we orient our experience. Russell Matheson (2006) provides the example of an 'arithmetical attitude', in which one would be oriented to the world of arithmetical objects. Whereas "our normal waking experience takes place in 'the natural attitude'...in it we are oriented to the world of actually existing things" (Matheson 2006, p. 59). This understanding of the natural attitude or 'pre-philosophical attitude' is thought in phenomenology to be uncritically assumed by the natural sciences as the only attitude, whereas phenomenology is not a "science *belonging to the natural attitude*" (Matheson 2006, p. 64). The phenomenological attitude problematises the assumptions contained in the natural attitude, by bracketing these assumptions or applying the *epoché*. Phenomenologists' attempts to bracket their preconceptions in phenomenological investigation is called the 'phenomenological attitude' (Matheson 2006).

of the objects of consciousness. Yoga does this by distinguishing consciousness from the mind and therefore the objects of mental states, it is:

the ground condition of all awareness. Consciousness is not part or an aspect of the mind. Mind is physical and consciousness is not...Mind in this view is the interfacing instrumentality that faces consciousness on one side and the brain on the other. (Rao 2005, p. 3)

Importantly, in relation to Fasching's development of the consciousness, which is realised in contemplation, the Yogic mind is able to withdraw from the products of the senses through contemplation. It can empty itself of all *vyttis* (psycho-mental activities) and establish a direct relationship with consciousness-as-such or *Brahman*⁷⁶ the divine absolute.

Yoga's mapping of the passage through meditation outlines how the adherent can experience *Brahman*. Initially the practitioner is prepared for meditation through the practices of *āsana* (the postures) and *prāṇāyāma* (breath control). This is then followed by three preliminary exercises that require increasingly refined levels of focus which lead to meditation (*dhyāna*). The first of these is *pratyāhāra*, the introversion of the senses, then *dhṛti* or steadiness, followed by *dhāraṇā* or concentration. In this stage the adherent draws their focus inward, away from the *pañca tanmātra* or the five subtle qualities of smell, taste, vision, touch and sound that are engaged through the sense organs. These three stages are completed when the *yogin* achieves *dhyāna* or meditation. In meditation "the body, breath, the mind, the intellect, and the ego, all lose their individual existence and merge into one single state of Being" (Iyengar 1998, p. 30). These three stages, *pratyāhāra*, *dhāraṇā* and *dhyāna*, lead to the last limb of the

⁷⁶ The conception of *Brahman* as consciousness is drawn from the Upaniṣads, where one's 'innermost essence' "call it *Brahman*, first principle or deity, can bear any similarity or analogy or identity with that which we meet with here 'behind man's pale forehead,' as consciousness" (Deussen 2010, p. 132). This is one of a number of understandings of *Brahman* starting with its original meaning, which was derived from the root *bṛh* (to grow) and understood as divine ground, vast expanse or absolute. Later a pantheistic meaning was applied in which *Brahman* came to mean "supreme principle behind and above all the various deities" (Feuerstein 1990, p. 64), and later still, *Brahman* was associated with the notion of the inner-most self or *ātman*. All of these understandings are recognised here, though the original meaning is generally what is being referred to in this study. *Brahman* should not be confused with *Brahmā* or God, one of the triad of Hindu Gods, which also includes *Vishnuu*, and *Śiva*. *Brahmā* "is carefully distinguished from the *Brahman*, which is the impersonal Absolute beyond all distinctions" (Feuerstein 1990, p. 63).

eight-fold path of Yoga which is *samādhi* (ecstasy⁷⁷ or self-realisation). In this final stage the practitioner loses all self-identification as they, the act and the object of meditation merge (Iyengar 1998).

Yoga understands the process that leads to this self-realisation as the dissolution of the aspects of the mind that give it the sense of ‘I-ness’ or *ahaṃkāra*.⁷⁸ Prior to complete absorption these aspects of mind combine in varying ways through the preparatory stages of meditative focus⁷⁹ until they fuse in *samādhi*. This Yogic conception of the relationship of the mind to consciousness is similar to Fasching and Rowland’s, though theirs is a Western philosophical reading of the mind, which Fasching describes as the “transparency of consciousness” (Fasching 2008, p. 466) and consciousness as the “taking place of the *phenomenality* of phenomena” (ibid.).

Contemplative consciousness and *learning feelings*

The co-researchers described their experience of this form of consciousness as their sense of merging with an elemental ground. Their growing familiarity with this substrate led to them *learning* of its *feelings*, which supported the new meaning they made from these experiences.⁸⁰ A significant way that their *learning of feelings* appeared to do this was their inner memory of a somatic tone or *felt* sign that they used as a marker when they returned to the interior through contemplation. Jason, a yoga practitioner and teacher at LMU, Los Angeles, described the outcome of his yoga practice as something being left behind or ‘carried over’. Describing this *feeling* he said, “you know it’s like when people are really deeply relaxed, they’ve spent an hour or so getting into their body doing these exercises, and then they finally lie down, it’s just like, like they’re really getting the residue of all of that stuff.” (Interview, 11th

⁷⁷ Here I am drawing from Feuerstein, who in reflection on Eliade’s work, defines *samādhi* as ecstasy, a type of ecstasy, which is said to arise when after complete sensory inhibition, the adherent experiences a ‘oneness’, or a merging of the subject and object (Feuerstein 1990, p. 301).

⁷⁸ The *ahaṃkāra* is one of four aspects of the *manomayakośa*⁷⁸ (mental body), which is one of seven *kośas* (bodies or sheaths). The *ahaṃkāra* can dissolve because in the state of *samādhi*, the four aspects of the *manomayakośa* – the *manas* instinctive mind, *ahaṃkāra* the sense of I-ness, *citta* memory, and *buddhi* higher mind – merge in *samādhi*.

⁷⁹ The intense focus in meditation is understood by Yoga as a force that draws the adherent through the levels of meditative concentration. It is described by Patanjali in his *Yoga-Sūtra* (III.2) as the “one-directional flow” (*eka-tānatā*) of presented ideas (*pratyaya*) relative to a single object of focus” (Feuerstein 1990, p. 96).

⁸⁰ The pre-predicative, somatic and cognitive stages of meaning making through contemplation are described in detail in Chapters Six to Eight.

October, 2009). Jason then spoke of the way that his repeated experience of this residue supported his journey from the ‘person he had been’ to the person he currently was.⁸¹

Hannah, a yoga practitioner and academic in New Jersey, outlined the way her experience of contemplative consciousness resulted in “a sense of an internal reference” (Interview, 22nd November, 2009) that led her to feel as though she “didn’t need to constantly protect herself” (ibid.). Angelica, a Sivananda⁸² yoga teacher in Los Angeles, spoke of a pre-figurative understanding/*feeling* beyond the ineffability of her contemplative experiences that she could return to. She said, “it’s experiential, you have certain feelings that you might not have had before, so in a sense you can’t put them into words but you know them when you have them again” (Interview, 22nd November, 2009). It was Angelica’s re-engagement with these *feelings* that led to her realisation that, as she expressed it, “I think it’s the trusting in something bigger, knowing you’re part of something bigger, that takes the pressure off. It’s breaking through limitations, most of which are self-imposed anyway. It’s confronting the ego, the desperate fear of losing yourself” (ibid.). Jorge Ferrer, Chair of the East-West Psychology Department, CIIS, emphasised the importance of these somatic markers in his description of the changes that can emerge through contemplation. He said, “whatever changes we make in our conscious awareness there is a way to root that change in the body, it makes that more permanent you know, because the body is much more solid” (Interview, 5th November, 2009).

Each of these aspects of the co-researchers’ experience illustrates the importance of bodily knowing and the paradox of contemplative somatic experience. For while the body can be the ‘solid’ container of contemplative experience, it is also permeable, interwoven through its contexts and relations by primordial intertwining systems, such as those defined here by phenomenology, Yoga, neurophenomenology and associated sciences. Phenomenology’s framing of the body as interrelational through *flesh* relies on an understanding of the act of perception as a reciprocal activity binding the

⁸¹ This concept of somatic markers is discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

⁸² The Sivananda lineage was brought to North America in 1957 by Swami Vishnu-devananda, a disciple of the yoga master Swami Sivananda. There are currently six Sivanada Yoga Vedanta centres in North America: Grass Valley, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, Woodbourne and New York. Another disciple of Swami Sivananda, Swami Satyananda Saraswati, who was a wandering sannyasin from 1962 to 1982, travelled extensively establishing Ashrams in 48 countries including Australia. There are currently two Ashrams and yoga teacher training centres and many smaller yoga schools in Australia.

perceived, the act of perception and the perceiver. The interspersed of these aspects is repeated in the Yogic concepts of *Brahman*, the divine, interweaving ground interpenetrating all material reality and the intertwining of the *guṇas*. The elemental and interrelational systems of both philosophies are reflected in the ecologies of neurophenomenology's physiological systems. These philosophical and scientific models of an ecological body challenge Cartesian notions of a body disconnected from its mind and the separation of its visible outer expression and invisible or mute interior. In addition, they provide a theoretical framework with which to visualise and understand the *feeling nexus* and the way that it is *felt* by the interrelational body.

Embodied learning, knowing and knowledge

The importance of the ecological body in learning is developed here through a range of pedagogical concepts and practices, starting with a definition and overview of embodied learning⁸³ and knowledge. The cognitive bias in mainstream education is then challenged by Lakoff and Johnson's (1999) theory of the embodied mind, and Michael Polanyi's concept of *tacit knowing* which asserts that the body leads learning. Following this, Yogic and phenomenological understandings of embodied knowing are used to define the ecological body, which can engender an immersive form of learning that includes engagement with the *feeling nexus*. Further, the interrelationality of this body is described in holistic pedagogical practices that engage a range of ways of knowing other than the cognitive. This study suggests that the direct, embodied nature of this learning underpins the positive changes that a number of the co-researchers reported from contemplation. Lastly, examples from the fieldwork of this form of learning are supported by proposals for the development of contemplative curricula founded on a holistic approach to pedagogy.

Educational approaches that recognise the importance of the body in learning are variously labelled somatic, embodied, kinaesthetic learning. There are conflicting understandings of these approaches in the various disciplines which investigate

⁸³ Embodied learning, embodiment and somatic learning are closely aligned and often used interchangeably to describe the construction of knowledge through the engaged body in daily life. However, somatic learning is often used to mean kinaesthetic learning, which is said to be directly experienced through bodily awareness. This is an aspect of the embodied learning that the co-researchers described, though they more commonly experienced a form of embodied learning that is a "broader, more holistic view of constructing knowledge that engages the body as a site of learning" (Freiler 2008, p. 39).

embodied learning. However, Tammy Freiler's (2008) definition is useful, as it points to the lived somatic experience that underpins many classifications; she observes that embodied knowledge is a "way to construct knowledge through direct engagement in bodily experiences and inhabiting one's body through a felt sense of being-in-the-world" (p. 40). This understanding is extended by a range of disciplines, including sociology and feminist studies, which to varying degrees view the body as a socially constructed rather than biological entity.

These disciplines also regard knowledge as situated or 'located', and thus specific to or grounded in its context. In this way the sociological body is said to be socially moulded by the discourses, practices and institutions which engage it, while the body in feminism is often regarded as the corporeal space in which 'gendered acts' are directly inscribed. As the feminist theorist Judith Butler famously claimed, the body has no natural determining characteristics but that "various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts there would be no gender at all" (Butler in Chapman 1998, p. 2). In both disciplines the surface of the body often appears to be sculpted by social, gendered, legal and economic norms. For despite the possible presumption of the body's interiority, it is frequently ignored because of the focus on the social framing of the body.⁸⁴

The body leads learning

This project acknowledges the perspectives which privilege the rational and the social construction of the body but suggests that there is an equally important region of pre-predicative bodily being and knowing. It is what Merleau-Ponty calls the "*experience*

⁸⁴ A group of feminist scholars currently challenging the limited agency of the body in some areas of feminist theory are engaging with the 'biological', which is their term for the interior. In her critique of rationalism in educational discourse the educational philosopher Robyn Barnacle (2009) discusses the exclusion of the biological in favour of the cultural construction of the body. She introduces a range of theorists working to counter what she describes as the one-sidedness that has "dominated western thinking since Descartes, where thought and the symbolic are treated as reigning over the biological and material" (Barnacle 2009, p. 24). In her *Gut instinct: The body and learning* Barnacle (2009) introduces the work of Elizabeth Wilson who highlights Freud's influence on feminist thought and in particular his exclusion of the neurological from early clinical research. Wilson suggests that this has, in part, led to an overemphasis on the psychological and cultural in feminist theory. Her attempts to remedy this through her engagement with neurobiological data are summed up in her statement that "exploring the entanglement of biochemistry, affectivity, and the physiology of the internal organs [it] will provide us with new avenues into the body" (Wilson 2004, p. 14).

of rationality', the manner in which thought and conceptual ability arise out of a more primordial, less articulated form of experience" (Moran 2002, p. 419). Michael Polanyi (2009/1966) defines it as *tacit knowing* and suggests that, "every time we make sense of the world, we rely on our tacit knowledge of impacts made by the world on our body and the complex responses of our body to these impacts. Such is the exceptional position of our body in the universe" (Polanyi in Clark 2001, p. 85).

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1999), in their challenge to what they term Anglo-American analytic philosophy, categorically state that, "the mind is inherently embodied; Thought is mostly unconscious; Abstract concepts are largely metaphorical" (p. 4). Based on their empirical research they propose that reason develops far from the disembodied realms where Descartes in his *Principles of philosophy* (1644) is said to have originally placed it. Their contention is that reason arises from the nature of our brains, bodies and bodily experience, for the same neural and cognitive mechanisms involved in bodily functions are at work in conceptual systems. Lakoff and Johnson summarise their findings by asserting that reason is not a transcendent feature of the disembodied mind but is "shaped crucially by the peculiarities of our human bodies, by the remarkable details of the neural structure of our brains, and by the specifics of our everyday functioning in the world" (ibid.).

Polanyi also argues that the body leads cognition, suggesting that it is our cognitive processes which are always catching up to the somatic. He asserts that while we may not feel the internal processes of our body, which precede cognitive reflection, there is indeed a bodily root to thought and learning (Polanyi in Clark 2001, p. 15). Cadin spoke of this when discussing the results of his yoga practice in the Yoga Psychology class at Ramapo College. He said, "when we do like the stretches and practice I guess it adds a new dimension to it and makes it easier to learn that way...Yeh it's definitely a lot easier to stay focused on what we're doing" (Interview, 13th November, 2009).

The ecological body and education

Many dominant rationalist approaches in educational discourse and practice still tend to treat the body as a housing for the mind, or as Barnacle (2009) terms it, the "brain in the vat scenario" (p. 22). Bai and her colleagues (2009) suggest that this has led, to "the

disconnect from body, senses, and world in the practice of education” (p. 319). However, bodily awareness is pivotal in somatic education, which is described by Thomas Hanna, one of the founders of the field, as “the art and science of the interrelational process between awareness, biological function, and the environment” (Hanna in Jolly 1994, p. 3). Somatic education’s concern with learning processes initiated by the body’s movement within its environment recognises, as does this project, that somatic pedagogy is “founded on a state of absorption in sensory-motor and kinesthetic experience...[where] the major part of what happens in experience belongs to the pre-verbal realm” (Jolly 1994, p. 17). Although Yvan Jolly acknowledges the foundational aspect of the preverbal in learning, her focus is specifically kinesthetic experience, as opposed to the proprioceptive engagement with gestalts of *feeling*, which is central here.

The somatic is equally important in adult education that includes the ‘other ways of knowing’, such as intuitive, pre-predicative, somatic and affective, which are often contrasted with cognitive knowing (Taylor 2001). A number of these approaches engage with non-Western perspectives as they provide models of learning that recognise the “interrelationship among an adult learner’s body, cognition, emotion, and spirituality” (Merriam & Sek Kim 2008, p. 78). They are based on a holistic approach that rejects the mind-body split in many mainstream educational systems, for they recognise the interrelationality of the whole student.

The potential of ecological bodily being for education is described by Seamus Carey (2000) through his experience of being permeable or interwoven through his contexts. He says in “recognizing the otherness that pervades my ‘self,’ I step outside of the ego’s tendency to totalize the other and into an ontological horizon from which I can understand, feel with and for, and relate to, the other” (p. 40). Carey’s experience describes the community building and development of empathy between students and students and educators that can result from contemplative somatic experience.

The positive impacts of somatic experience in education are currently being recognised in contemplative, integral and transformative education. Examples of this can be found in Dirx’s (2008) work on somatic awareness in his examination of the role of emotion in adult learning; in the participatory approach to integral transformative education by

Ferrer et al. (2005); in Esbjörn-Hargens's (2006) development of integral curricula which requires attention to somatic states; in Holland's (2004) work on pedagogical practices for students with disability using meditation and somatic awareness; in Seitz's (2009) thesis of a contemplative approach to deep learning; and in Yorks and Kasl's (2006) integration of expressive (embodied) ways of knowing to foster transformative learning.

Such pedagogical initiatives, which integrate ways of knowing other than the cognitive, challenge rationalist educational approaches that focus almost exclusively on the cognitive. These rationalist systems have at best relegated the somatic to a few disciplines, such as dance or physical education. In her study of the somatic in education, Judith Cohen (2003) found that apart from "specific programs aimed at movement education, performing arts or therapy, higher education doesn't appear to consider the body as a site of learning" (p. 87). Despite this omission in mainstream education, the acknowledgement of and engagement with embodied learning has emerged in a range of alternative pedagogies.

Each of these systems question the influence of Enlightenment ideology and in particular its devaluing of the body through the overemphasis on reason. Embodied or somatic learning and knowledge is informed by the interactions of the whole body-mind or the psychosomatic complex. While education has traditionally emphasised linguistic, aural and visual learning, body-mind theorists in education – such as Bai et al. (2009); Beckett (1998); Clark (2001); Chapman (1998); Freiler (2008); Merriam (2008(a), (b)); O'Loughlin (2006); and Schlattner (1994) – suggest that the body should not be considered a 'transparent tool' (Dae Joong 2003), unacknowledged presence, or the inconvenient subsidiary to be attended to at toilet breaks. Bai et al. (2009) caution against pedagogy that ignores the body, warning that it may lead to students becoming:

alienated from their own embodied knowing and rhythms of learning. The student's intersubjective experience, a gold mine of opportunity for learning, securely anchored in meaning, is passed over in the race to teach curriculum content. In the end, teacher and student are caught in a malaise of disconnection from awareness of the vitality in their own realities...(p. 323)

Rather, bodily being needs to be recognised as a “route to knowledge construction” (Kerka in Cohen 2003, p. 88). These theorists and this project suggest pedagogical approaches that encourage educators and students to understand the part that their body plays in learning, and to recognise it as the progenitor of learning and knowledge (Cohen 2003).

Examples of embodied knowing and pedagogy from the fieldwork

In each of the universities⁸⁵ where I conducted fieldwork in 2009, I witnessed forms of somatic, contemplative pedagogy. At LMU, Los Angeles, in Dr Katherine Harper’s Zen Art class, I noted the way she challenged mainstream approaches to the body in learning when she asked her students to get up from their desks and lie on the floor for a guided meditation. This simple rearrangement of their usual bodily experience initiated the process of confronting the “‘headiness’ of academic learning, thus the mind/body hierarchy” (Wilcox 2009, p. 107). In addition, Harper contested the predominant cognitive state of consciousness that students in educational settings are generally required to be in. She shifted their usual state of consciousness to the contemplative with a guided meditation, which she used to provide them with an experiential understanding of the contemplative states of consciousness that many Zen artists paint from. Morris, one of Dr Harper’s students, said of his meditation experience that “it definitely helped me calm down, I have thoughts that continuously flow through my head...just constantly moving and changing thoughts on numerous issues, but it helped to calm my mind, and there was a point where my mind was in fact emptied and I didn’t focus on anything” (Interview, 15th November, 2009).

At the CIIS in San Francisco, Dr Jorge Ferrer employs a participatory approach to contemplative education, where he integrates somatic contemplative ways of knowing into every aspect of his classes. He uses formal contemplative practice, and less structured creative mindful practices, which include: “mindfulness of oneself and others, generosity – giving your full attention to another person when they are speaking. You know mindful speech, also nonattachment, being of service to something greater...” (Interview, 5th November, 2009). Ferrer describes an important aspect of

⁸⁵ I have not included all of the courses that I observed on my fieldtrip, though they are outlined in the methods chapter.

this approach as ‘embodied interactive meditation’, which starts when he teaches his students basic mindful somatic awareness/meditation techniques that they can then use with others in a ‘cooperative inquiry’. He outlines this process, initiated by interactive meditations, which helps his students ‘get into their bodies’:

into the depths of their heart, into contemplative awareness. And then a facilitated construction of knowledge processes, from one-dimensional experience. So from an experience they have in meditation, they then go from that place to do a mandala, and then they will share with their partners and then little by little there will be the constructing of knowledge. Then they come together and contrast what they are finding so it’s like a process a very organic process. A more feminine approach if you wish, it’s a more organic emergence of knowing. I don’t like the top down approach, you know the teacher putting the knowledge in the people’s brain, right? (ibid.)

Ferrer’s participatory-integral education method critiques approaches to holistic education that fall back into ‘cognicentrism’ with their underlying focus on the mind and its intellectual capabilities (Ferrer et al. 2005, p. 306). Rather, what he and his colleagues have developed is an “approach to integral transformative learning in which all human dimensions are invited to co-creatively participate in the unfolding of the educational process” (ibid.). Their emphasis on the somatic, meditative and interrelational in this approach mirrors that of a number of contemplative, transformative and integral education theorists. In their overview of the current landscape of integral education, Esbjörn-Hargens and his colleagues (2010) use a variety of approaches to define this field. They include the exploration of multiple perspectives, the use of first-, second-, and third-person methodologies, the weaving together of the domains of self, culture, and nature, the combination of critical thinking and experiential feeling, regular individual practices of transformation, and the engagement with multiple ways of knowing (Esbjörn-Hargens et al. 2010, p. 6).

I observed an integral contemplative approach in Dr James Morley’s Yoga Psychology class at Ramapo College, New Jersey. His integration of the experiential and theoretical developed out of a strong desire for his students to have a comprehensive understanding of Yoga’s psychology, practices and philosophy. He discovered a way to do this

through his personal contemplative practice, where he experienced what he terms the ‘gestalt switch’, which happened when he moved between contemplative and ‘ordinary’ awareness. As he said in our interview, “you need to switch back, go back and forth, and I think that’s how I’ve learned as I go back and forth” (Interview, 8th November, 2009). He felt that this shift between the experiential/embodied and theoretical/cognitive facilitated learning.

After describing the gestalt switch, Morley (2009) went on to outline how he applied these realisations to the development of his course, emphasising again the need for both the experiential and theoretical:

You have to sit still and pay attention to your breath and experience all of the crazy things that happen to you when you do that, and get through that to the more advanced stages. You have to encounter the nightmare of your monkey brain, and your daydreaming, and your constant resistance to sitting still...We all have to go through that, but at the same time we also need to be cognitively prepared for it. It doesn’t mean that you abandon all hope, and just see the two as dualistically split. So when I teach students about Yogic conceptions of the body, I’m not expecting them to completely understand it. I’m just initially presenting it as a framework for them, I know they’re all going to get it intellectually, they’ll be able to repeat it back on an exam, and that’s the requirement and that’s good. But it’s really...the theoretical is there as a framework for them so that if they have an experience in the yoga practice that is outside of their frame of reference, they can connect to the philosophy or theory and get more out of it. (ibid)

Learning in this integrated way was important for Eamon, one of Dr Morley’s students, who said:

I find it’s a really nice break from just sitting in a chair just staring at a blackboard for an hour and a half. It’s more interesting, you get more engaged in the class, it’s easier to pay attention, definitely. And it just feels better to, it’s unnatural to sit in one spot for that long, you know? Uhm well like the main thing that I really focus on is doing the *āsanas* and I found that, like after doing

a couple of them, I just feel more focused, and I feel like I can just get more into the topic. Like I find that it's a really helpful way to start writing an essay, this is the first part, and then I don't know it just helps me get work done more effectively. (Interview, 9th December, 2009)

Suggestions for somatic contemplative pedagogy

To fully understand and engage pedagogically with contemplative embodied knowing, it should not only be conceptualised as “both fluid and relational, but also as enactment processes that need to be located in time, place and space” (Evans & Davies 2011, p. 270). In addition, it is useful for the contemplative pedagogue to consider the “commonalities and differences among learners...[when seeking ways]...to incorporate appropriate experiences of embodiment” (ibid.). Research in this area has found that shared connections among learners were essential for developing the sense of relatedness and trust that students require when directly engaging their bodies in learning (See Konopatsch & Payne (2012); Macintyre & Buck (2008); Pylvänäinen (2003); Yorks & Kasl (2002, 2006)).

There are three key issues⁸⁶ which need to be addressed when integrating the benefits of contemplation into pedagogy. Firstly, contemplative pedagogy should account for the idiosyncratic, subtle and sometimes ineffable nature of contemplative somatic experience. Secondly, contemplative somatic approaches should accept and engage the intersubjectivity and interrelationality of these states and therefore the sites of conjunction with the multiple influences that students often experience. Lastly, the development of pedagogy that incorporates contemplative embodiment needs to consider the relevance of context. These issues are also generally framed by a comprehensive or ‘whole-student’ approach to teaching (Seitz 2009). Importantly, this method includes the embodied experience of the teacher in relation with their students,

⁸⁶ In their *New directions, new questions? Social theory, education and embodiment*, John Evans and Brian Davies (2011) propose six key issues relating to the exploration of ‘body pedagogies’. Firstly, they are fluid, culturally encoded, psycho-social practices collected in and between multiple contexts, geographies and locations. Secondly, they are entangled in power and authority relations. Thirdly, they emerge from constellations of knowledge and are framed by historical and geographic narratives about embodiment. Fourthly, they require resources that not everyone has equal access to. Fifthly, they have the potential to change the social and educational lives of individuals and populations; and lastly, they potentially have “spatial, infrastructure and institutional moorings that configure and enable them” (Evans & Davies 2011, p. 10).

as opposed to the teacher acting as a “passive body, a conduit of knowledge, an empty jug which is filled with the curriculum which is then proportionally doled out to the students” (Sameshima 2008, p. 33). The whole-person approach is also founded on the understanding that the complexity and abstract nature of embodied experience warrants an approach that “balances somatic dimensions of learning with other domains of knowing across multiple levels of knowledge construction” (Freiler 2008, p. 44).

Maryanne Fazio-Fox’s (2010) transdisciplinary research into curricular models suggests six methods to apply somatic approaches pedagogically. The first is the incorporation of the somatic through movement and sensory awareness exercises; second, imaginal exercises such as active imagination, guided visualisation and ritual; third, transpersonal and intuitive exercises including meditation, nature walks and dream journaling; fourth, the encouragement of chthonic space in curriculum where students are provided with periods of incubation and contemplation; fifth, pedagogy that engages the affective through compassion work, dialogue and community ritual; and lastly, the encouragement of multiple creative exercises including music, poetry, sculpture and drawing (p. 166). Similar approaches are illustrated in the CCMIS’s *Tree of Contemplative Practices* (<http://www.contemplativemind.org/practices/tree>).⁸⁷

In summary

The understanding of the ecological body developed in this chapter suggests that its interspersion of all it engages can produce an immersive experience that provides access to the *feeling nexus*. Additionally, it proposes that this expanded form of somatic awareness can be understood as a type of knowing that can enhance learning. It is an approach that contests the neglect of the body in much mainstream education and is described by Tammy Freiler (2008) as an ‘interrelated essence’, which she defines as knowledge that is directly produced through the body (p. 38). Importantly in this examination of learning through contemplation, embodied knowing is said to be most readily accessed through the realm of subjectivity (Freiler 2008, p. 43). The co-researchers’ reports from contemplation support Freiler’s proposition, because it

⁸⁷ CCMIS’s *Contemplative Practice Fellowships* provide a useful overview of contemplative pedagogy (See: <http://www.contemplativemind.org/programs/fellowships>).

appeared that pre-figurative and somatic immersion in the interior underpinned their learning through contemplation.⁸⁸

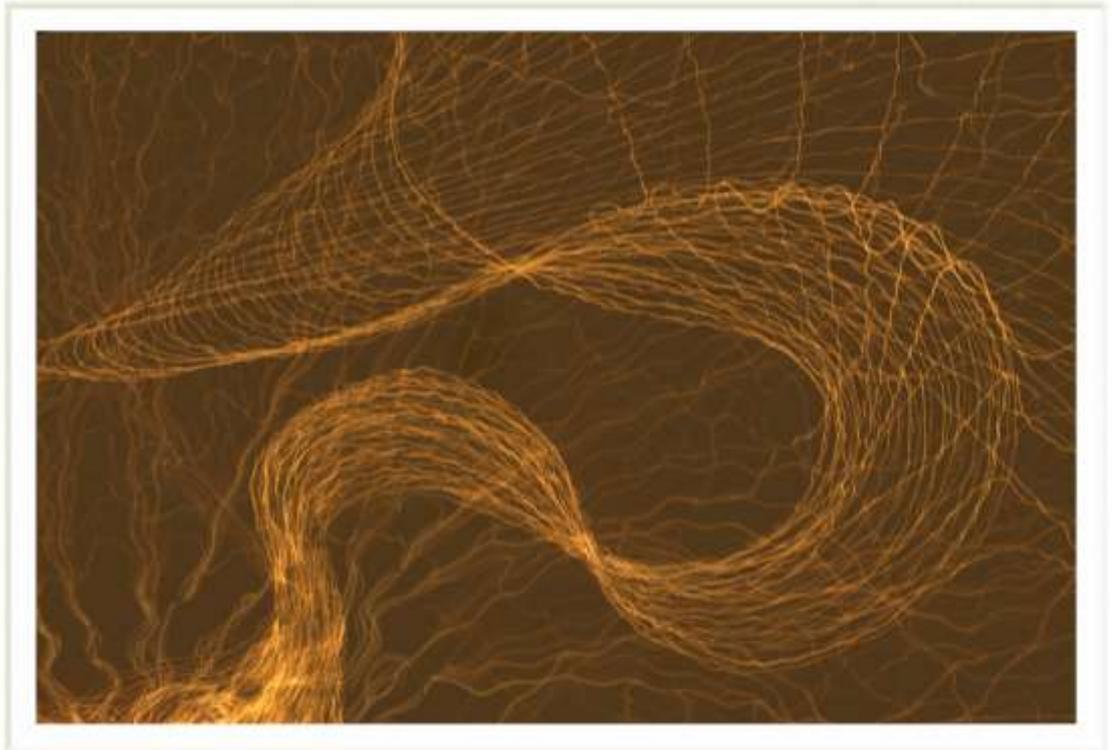
This chapter's examination of the outcomes of somatic learning, and the definition of the ecological body as an entity that can support learning, started with the phenomenological and Yogic development of a body made interrelational through *flesh*, *Brahman* and the *guṇas*. This revealed a body intimately entwined in the material and numinous, the physical and social. Yoga and phenomenology also described its foundation in an elemental substrate, and a witness consciousness that mediates both. Findings from neurophenomenology then provided a physiological illustration of an interrelational body consisting of entwining neurological and endocrinological systems.

The correspondence between physiological and philosophical models and the *feeling nexus* emphasises the shared ecological form and processes of the interrelational body, the *feeling nexus* and the contemplative state of consciousness. Their equivalence helps define the ecological body, and is illustrative of the way contemplative experience can lead to engagement with the *feeling nexus*. This *feeling* of the *feeling nexus* can support a sense of integration and wholeness, which is, I believe, what founds learning through contemplation. Educational methods and environments required to support and enhance this contemplative somatic learning were detailed with examples from somatic education and the co-researchers' reports.

The following chapter examines the first and second stages of the *contemplative trajectory*, starting with the co-researchers' return to their body and then their growing familiarity with *feelings* of the interior.

⁸⁸ This relates both to their informal personal development and formal education.

Chapter Three: Stages One and Two of the *Contemplative Trajectory* Returning to the Body and Deepening of Internal Senses



Cameron Beau Wylie Foster, 2013

Introduction to the contemplative trajectory

To be sure, cultural variations in dispositions toward self-analysis and reflexivity compound the difficulty of eliciting experiential accounts, as does the frequently ineffable or inexpressible character reported of such experiences. Yet there is no good reason to presume the experiential muteness of altered states of consciousness. (Csordas 1997, p. 241)

Contemplative states speak back, Jason told me, with the sense of patterns, layers and superimpositions. He was describing the way that the refined focus he achieved in his yoga practice allowed him to ‘hear’ the responses from his interior, to hear/*feel* into the “shadows of his body” (Interview, 11th October, 2009). Confirming Csordas’s (1997) statement above, Jason discovered a language of the interior. His ‘learning’ of this other language was a significant aspect of a trajectory through contemplation, which is the subject of the following three chapters. The importance of this trajectory is highlighted by its reoccurrence in many of the co-researchers’ descriptions of contemplation. Its five stages are analysed in an attempt to demystify contemplative subjective experience. Each stage, from the initial return to the body, to the final engagement with an elemental ground-of-being, highlights the co-researchers’ growing familiarity with the contemplative interior, the way they made meaning of it, and how this underpins their learning through contemplation.

The structuring of this chapter, and the two that follow it, by the *contemplative trajectory* affirms the deeply phenomenological nature of the project. This was clear in the data analysis stage where the phenomenological imperative prompted the application of the *epoché*, which then revealed the *contemplative trajectory*. The framework it provides for the following three chapters was ‘disclosed’ by the bracketing of presuppositions and past research experience (Moustakas 1994, p. 86). Employing the *epoché* also disclosed the “beginnings in a free dedication to the problems themselves and to the demands stemming from them” (Husserl in Moustakas 1994, p. 86). The problem being addressed is the project’s aim to identify a fundamental mechanism actuating learning through contemplation, which was solved through identification of the elemental mechanism of the *feeling nexus*.

Understandings of the *feeling nexus* and its primordial substrate are developed in each of the five stages of the *contemplative trajectory*. In the first, the co-researchers' contemplative re-membering⁸⁹ of, or return to, their bodies supported their *feeling* of an interrelationality that is posited here as their initial experience of the *feeling nexus*. In the second stage, the co-researchers' experience of *internal feelings*, which occurred after they re-entered their bodies, is outlined in Yogic and phenomenological expressions of an elemental interrelationality. Following this stage, the co-researchers became more familiar with these *feelings* and began to sense expanded or synesthetic forms of the affective, such as finding emotion interspersed through their bodies. This stage, like the others, reveals an inherent ecology, which is examined with the phenomenological conception of affectivity as an interkinaesthetic field and Yoga's goal of *samādhi* (ecstasy or enstasy), or 'putting together' (Feuerstein 2008).

The fourth stage is the development of an altered sense of space and time that some of the co-researchers described as being in the *flow* or in the 'now'. These experiences are explicated through Merleau-Ponty's theory of perception, which is founded on the enfolding processes of *flesh*, as well as Yoga's schema of deepening levels of meditation, which result in the non-dual state of *samādhi* where there is zero-time. In the last stage the co-researchers discovered a pre-ontological⁹⁰ ground-of-being, a paradoxical space they found both in and outside themselves. It is a space that Yoga understands as the transcendent ground of *Brahman* the divine absolute, and phenomenology as an elemental field of motility. Initially co-researchers' descriptions and understandings of these different aspects of their contemplative experiences were limited, though continued practice led to an increased ability to *feel* their internal landscapes. I have termed this *learning feelings*,⁹¹ and the co-researchers' growing ability to learn these *feelings* resulted in significant changes in many of their lives.

⁸⁹ Here I reference Elana Michelson's (1998) article, *Re-membering: the return of the body to experiential learning*, in which she proposes that "experience is itself located in the body as well as in the social and material locations that bodies invariably occupy" (p. 217).

⁹⁰ Drawing from Martin Heidegger I use the term 'pre-ontological' in contrast to 'ontological', which is concerned with the nature of Being, to mean a pre-figurative experience or space beyond the ontological. The pre-ontological for Heidegger is an implicit aspect of Being partnering the ontological, for the Dasein has its "own ontical structure, in which a pre-ontological understanding of Being is comprised as a definite characteristic" (Heidegger in Wheeler, 2011, p. 5).

⁹¹ A detailed overview of precognitive, embodied and cognitive stages of *learning feelings* can be found in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight.

The stages of the trajectory

Pre-predicative, embodied, and cognitive phases in the *contemplative trajectory* underpin the changes in the co-researchers' meaning-making processes. These phases and the stages of the *contemplative trajectory* are similar to levels described in a range of learning trajectories in educational theory. Unlike this philosophical project, much of that work is founded on developmental approaches⁹² drawn predominately from psychology, such as the Behavioural, which is grounded in the research of the behavioural psychologist Burrhus Skinner; Cognitive-Transactional, from the developmental psychologist Jean Piaget, and advanced recently by the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky; Psychodynamic, starting with the work of the developmental psychologist Eric Erikson; and the Normative-Maturational theory founded on the work of the psychologist and paediatrician Arnold Gesell (Ferrell 2000, p. 113).

Another approach developed by the humanist psychologists Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers is employed by Peter Berends and his colleagues (2008) in their management education research. They outline a trajectory in personal development that has three stages: coaching, intervision groups or group learning, and solitary reflection. In this schema, Berends et al. (2008) emphasise the need in the first stage to initiate trust, which is grounded in the student's voluntary engagement with the programs they studied. In the intervision groups peer-to-peer learning occurs through group dialogue or 'collective inquiry'. In the last solitary reflection stage, the students spend time in 'reflective openness' where they can identify limiting preconceptions and work to change them.

In this learning trajectory, emotions, attitudes and assumptions are engaged at each stage in an attempt to reach a state of 'mindfulness'. Berends et al.'s understanding of

⁹² It is beyond the scope of this project to introduce the wide variety of educational developmental theories, though it is important to mention Robert Kegan's cognitive model, which is reflective of rationalist values in mainstream education. It proposes five stages of development in which each stage is a "more complex level of the cognitive reorganisation of our template for making meaning of new information and experience" (Brooks 2009, p. 161). It is significant here as current challenges to Kegan's model support the approach taken in this project. The central points in this critique are outlined by the adult education theorist Ann Brooks (2009) who contends that Kegan's model excludes "a developmental trajectory aimed at increased connection with others, deeper development of our ability to situate within our bodies, or a more metaphysical merger with a god figure" (p. 162).

this growing mindful awareness of one's assumptions, concepts, and behaviours (2008, p. 120) is to some extent comparable to the contemplative state as it is outlined in this project. However, their learning trajectory, unlike the one developed in this study, does not appear to have been created by entering the subjective space of contemplation to define its fundamental mechanisms.

Each of the stages of this project's learning trajectory provides insight into the *feeling nexus* mechanism, though a number of the co-researchers did not follow its course as it is outlined here. While these stages are described in a linear fashion for the sake of clarity, they also occurred in epicycles that were nonlinear in nature. The co-researchers' partial or sometimes circular engagement with the *contemplative trajectory* was "iterative and continuous...both an outcome and a process" (Dencev & Collister 2010, p. 180). Nonetheless, the progression through deepening levels of focus and increasingly intense altered perceptions, illustrated by this trajectory, was common for many of the co-researchers. In addition, I don't claim the five stages of this trajectory as a universal sequence for all contemplative practitioners, though aspects of it can be found in the Yoga research of Helberg (2009); Holdrege (1998); Hunter & Csikszentmihályi (2000); Morley (2001); Persson (2007, 2010); Phillips (2005); and Smith (2007).

The following three chapters survey the *contemplative trajectory*, starting in Chapter Three with the first two stages, the return to the body and the deepening of internal senses. Chapter Four examines expanded affectivity and the co-researchers' altered sense of time and space, while Chapter Five focuses on the last stage of the trajectory where the co-researchers experienced a pre-ontological ground-of-being. In each section, Yoga and phenomenology are used to clarify aspects of the co-researchers' experiences. Frequently in this project similar aspects of these two sciences of consciousness are used to examine different features of the co-researchers' reports. In the first section of this chapter, Merleau-Ponty's *flesh* ontology explains the co-researchers' experiences of the sense of their bodies expanding beyond their skin-boundaries. Later in this section, when Yoga and phenomenology's conceptions of interrelational processes are being correlated to illustrate the form and processes of the *feeling nexus*, *flesh* is aligned with the Yogic schema of the *gunas*.

Stage one: Return to the body

Western society is typified by a certain ‘disembodied’ style of life. Our shelters protect us from direct corporeal engagement with the outer world, our relative prosperity alleviating, for many of us, immediate physical need and distress. Via machines we are disinvested of work that once belonged to the muscles. Technologies of rapid communication and transportation allow us to transcend what used to be the natural limits imposed by the body. (Leder 1990, p. 3)

The initial stage in a number of the co-researchers’ *contemplative trajectory* was the realisation of the absence of their bodies outlined in Drew Leder’s claims above. This awareness often led to a return to their bodies, where they experienced a range of pre-figurative and somatic *feelings*. As they continued with contemplative practice many developed a familiarity with these *feelings* in the *learning feelings* process. In this stage they *learnt* or engaged with inner sensations and processes. What they *felt*, I am suggesting, is more than affective experience, it is *gestalts* that the *feeling nexus* creates from the affective, somatic, cognitive and transcendent modes of being. The co-researchers’ apprehension and learning of the *feeling nexus* through a return to the body, and their engagement with deepening levels of somatic experience, is the focus of this chapter.

The realisation of disembodiment, return to the body and movement through deepening levels of internal sensation appeared to result in focused and balanced states for the co-researchers. The body many of them returned to is the ecological body described in Chapter Two. Its interrelationality or permeability is elaborated in this section, though the emphasis in this chapter is on the way it facilitated the co-researchers’ experiences of expanded internal *feelings* and movement through interior layers and levels. The positive outcomes of the first stage of the *contemplative trajectory* are explored in this chapter through somatic pedagogy, a method that challenges the institutionalised absence of the body in mainstream education. Following this, Yogic and phenomenological understandings of the corporeal interior illustrate its interrelationality. In particular, the integrating force underpinning this interrelationality is described through the Yogic concepts of the *kośas* (sheaths) and the *guṇas* (strands or qualities). The latter is also presented as a model analogous with the *feeling nexus*. The

section concludes by analysing the ecological structure of a permeable form of the somatic, as this, I am suggesting, is what enables the *feeling nexus* to interweave it with the other modes of being.

The co-researchers' deepening experiences of their internal senses are then examined in the second stage of the *contemplative trajectory*. After introducing this passage through different internal levels to the *feeling nexus* experience, a second model analogous with the *feeling nexus* is examined to further define it. This is the *legein*, a pivotal concept in Heidegger's work on language. Its correlation with the *feeling nexus* is supported with a physiological illustration from neurophenomenology. This investigation of the second stage of the *contemplative trajectory* closes by considering pedagogical engagement with the frequent ineffability of subjective contemplative states.

The absent body and *learning feelings*

The co-researchers' initial contemplative experiences commonly led to their awareness of their absent bodies.⁹³ They often spoke, as Carol did, of finding that they had been "living from the head up"⁹⁴ (Interview, 12th October, 2009). They then described shifting from 'being in their heads' to 'being in their bodies', and this shift was initiated by their experience of particular *feelings*. Their early engagement with these *feelings*, which is the beginning of *learning feelings*, was more than a somatic experience despite it being *felt* or contained in the body. It is, I propose, their *feeling* of gestalts of the modes of being created by the *feeling nexus*. Hannah, an academic and yoga teacher at Ramapo College, spoke of something she called a 'sense of herself', a blended *feeling* made up of the somatic, cognitive, affective and transcendent, which she found located in her body through contemplation (Interview, 22nd November, 2009). Heather, a Sivananda Yoga student in Los Angeles, discovered her 'balance' (Interview, 24th October, 2009); Isabella, an academic and Yoga teacher at Ramapo, her 'centre' (Interview, 24th November, 2009); and Jason, a yoga teacher at LMU, an internal sense of 'space' (Interview, 11th October, 2009). Jason's description of this space, which he

⁹³ Here I reference Drew Leder's (1990) *The absent body* to introduce what he terms the 'decorporealized existence', which many co-researchers discovered when they returned to their bodies through contemplation.

⁹⁴ Asha Persson (2007) found something similar in her study of the Satyananda Yoga community in Australia. She observes that "'getting out of the head and into the body' [was]...a standard maxim among the Satyananda yogis" (Persson 2007, p. 48).

felt after *āsana* (yoga posture) practice, consisted of interoceptive and exteroceptive awareness, the cognitive, affective, and his sensing of an immaterial realm, situated within and beyond the boundaries of his body.

The co-researchers' attempts to discern the inner workings of their bodies was at times frustrated, however, those who continued in their practices and efforts to name these experiences frequently described a gestalt of *feelings* that had a somatic tone. This was expressed by Agnes, a Yoga philosophy student and teacher at LMU, as she attempted to name the effects of her yoga practice, "I can feel the changes in me but it's very subtle, it's hard to put into words, it's a feeling thing, it's on a different level, it's a vibration almost" (Interview, 9th October, 2009). In using the word *feeling* she is suggesting more than the common understanding of the objective recognition of one's implicit emotions, for it references an exchange with a witness consciousness and experiences of realms beyond the body.

In order to define the term *feeling* as it is used in this study I draw on the transpersonal psychologist John Heron's (1992) definition of 'feeling', which he differentiates from emotion and describes as:

a resonance of being, the capacity by which we participate in and are compresent with our world. Feeling, so defined, I regard as the grounding level of personhood: within it all other psychological modes are latent and out of it they proceed. (p. 1)

In his development of a 'science of the person', Heron understands *feeling* to be a ground or matrix of perception (1992, p. 92), which is founded in the body. The spatio-perceptual aspect of his definition articulates the experience which arose for a number of the co-researchers. It was most clearly communicated in their reports of an engagement with a *feeling realm* that had field-like qualities. The sense of the spatiality that the co-researchers retrieved in contemplation was one of moving through or within a non-specific location, which they described as 'being in the flow' or 'being in the now'. This 'now' is understood by Yoga to be an elemental substrate, or *Brahman*. However, despite the layer or level of this ground that the co-researchers *felt* themselves in, the experience began in their body.

Re-embodiment

The co-researchers' return to their bodies through contemplation, particularly contemplative movement such as yoga, supported the development of new understandings of themselves. In this initial stage of the *contemplative trajectory*, meaning making happened as they began to *learn feelings* or become familiar with inner sensations and processes, including the *feeling nexus*. Some experienced this as an expanded sense of themselves, in which they felt their inner space both bounded by their skin, and extending beyond it into something 'bigger', to a *field of feelings*. Their growing fluency with these *feelings* led to their mapping of the *field of feeling*, which Jason outlined when he spoke of finding 'traces' of his yoga practice that had remained in him. Describing this outcome of his practice he said, there's "this residual effect of it...I think that's really the essence of it, the carry over, as opposed to just working out with weights" (Interview, 11th October, 2009). These internal markers were lodged in his body and remained to guide him when he returned. The development of these signs was similar for a number of the co-researchers, who spoke of using them to navigate and map their interior landscapes.

The co-researchers' return to their bodies, including the awareness of these internal traces, reveals the paradox of incarnate experience that Leder (1990) identifies in *The absent body*. This is the somatic awareness, most regularly found in the West and exemplified in Cartesian dualism, which though undeniably incarnate is "essentially characterized by absence" (Leder 1990, p. 1). Leder understands this absence to have a distinctive physical presence that is "rarely the thematic object of experience" (ibid.).⁹⁵ Gabrielle Ivinson (2012) traces the absent body in pedagogical practice from a monastic legacy where the denial of the body went hand in hand with training the mind, to the way in which school desks in the 1960s were bolted to the floor to constrain bodies as a means to focus the mind, and finally to university lecture theatres that are designed to "accommodate minds within static bodies" (p. 490). Ivinson (2012) appends the protestant work ethic and instrumental rationalism to these influences, which can still be seen in many areas of mainstream education where focus on the body is regulative

⁹⁵ Here Leder is drawing from psychological research into perception that focused on the human hand. Using this research he suggests that 9 out of 10 people did not recognise their own hand in a series of photographs of hands, and concludes that, "the organ with which I perform my labor, eat my food, caress my loved ones, yet remains a stranger to me" (Leder 1990, p.1).

rather than instructive. She observes that it wasn't until the impact of the 'corporeal turn' was felt in education that educational theorists began to examine the ways that the body is implicated in pedagogy. For her and other educational theorists this is the impact of the pedagogic device acting as a 'relay' for the enactment of power on students' bodies.

Despite a number of challenges to the artificial barriers erected between mind and body, outlined in the academic or cognitive verses skill or somatic debate, there are still disciplinary areas that continue to "suppress the subjective, involved, affective and corporeal aspects of the person" (Ivinson 2012, p. 490). In her research on the 'moving body' in education, Ivinson contests this approach by using the example of choreographic pedagogy to illustrate an 'invisible pedagogy' that is at play in teachers' unconscious regulation of their students' bodies. This results, she suggests, from their lack of awareness regarding the relations between the somatic and semantic, and the way that bodily movement is integral to learning.

In her development of choreographic pedagogy, Ivinson describes how dance students make 'body codes' visible through the development of 'scripts' that codify moving bodies. Body codes can be both culturally constructed and the habits and movement repertoires that develop in individuals' daily lives (Ivinson 2012, p. 500). However, it is difficult to describe them because of the lack of appropriate means such as 'movement scripts'. Ivinson claims that this is the result of a "western legacy that perpetuates a Platonic-Cartesian dualism that separates the somatic from the semiotic" (ibid.). To counter this she provides the example of non-linguistic scripts that can arise in dance education. They are initiated when students mimic their teacher's body movements, this can coalesce into recognisable patterns and then develop into dance narratives. In this process body movement gradually incorporates counting, rhythm, ideation, musical beats and concepts, all of which may then be communicated via notation and language (Ivinson, 2012, p. 502).

In addition to this process, both formal and informal scripts have evolved in dance education. Ivinson outlines an informal script or 'body-practice code' as she describes a dance student teaching her fellow students stylised movements which she copied from a music video. There is also a range of formal systems that have been produced to notate

and communicate choreography, such as the Laban method, which uses symbols rather than words. Similar in a way to musical notation, these choreographic texts:

undermine the ways we normally think about human acts and actions because they force us, cognitively, to put images of human bodies into events and into our thinking about events. When you are confronted with a movement text, you can no longer live solely in a notionally abstract world of words alone (Williams in Ivinson 2012, p. 500).

This concept of movement scripts links to the *feeling languages* that can result from contemplative experience. It may even be possible to devise symbolic contemplative scripts that would be useful in contemplative pedagogy, though that is beyond the scope of this project.

As well as the relations between Ivinson's concept of movement scripts and this study's *feeling languages*, there is another aspect of her research that links the two studies. In the descriptions of her somatic pedagogy, Ivinson suggests that 'stillness exercises' drawn from meditation practice can be used in the classroom as a part of an extensive 'somatic repertoire'. However, despite her suggestion of stillness practices, allusion to contemplative knowing and her development of nonverbal scripts, unlike this project, the focus of Ivinson's research is grounded in the maintenance and reproduction of power by educational institutions through students' bodies.

In a similar approach to Ivinson's, the dance pedagogue Glendda Batson (2009) explores the *caesura* or resting pause in performance and dance. In this research she discovered something comparable to Ivinson's scripts and the co-researchers' somatic markers. Batson writes of participants' 'inner narratives', which supported them to 'shed' layers of external focus until an 'uncontrived' awareness arose (2009, p. 188). In her research with Masters degree dance students, Batson found that when she introduced the reflective practice of intentional rest, her students experienced a passage from daily consciousness to states of sustained attention that provided access to a more refined awareness of their movements. Similar to aspects of the *contemplative trajectory*, these experiences were grounded by deepening levels of somatic awareness that relied on the saturation of "tissue with awareness, during and after movement

feedback” (ibid.). While Batson didn’t explore her students’ interior worlds past their initial access to it through reflective somatic exercises, and its impact on their creative processes as performers, she did map a trajectory of change that has some similarities to this project’s *contemplative trajectory*.

Yogic and phenomenological understandings of the corporeal interior

As the co-researchers’ somatic awareness deepened through contemplation they began to report encounters with an interrelational and integrative force that can be found in the ontologies of the body in Yoga and phenomenology. They are outlined here to support this chapter’s claim that the return to the body through contemplation both leads to encounters with the *feeling nexus* and founds the benefits attributed to contemplative education. The co-researchers’ feeling of this interrelationality is described by Asha Persson (2007) in her study of the Satyananda Yoga community in Sydney, Australia. She found that as the Satyananda practitioners awakened to bodily consciousness they experienced a ‘resemblage’ of the sense of themselves, which before Yoga had been “fragmented by intersubjective life and mental excess” (2007, p. 48). Yoga would attribute this reintegration to their growing awareness of the interrelationality of the *kośas* or subtle bodies that comprise the body and the integrating force of the *triguṇa*.

The kośas

The interrelationality of the *pañca-kośa* (the five bodies) is what makes the Yogic body ecological or permeable. Although the complex of the five *kośas* is often visualised like a Russian nesting doll, in which the individual *kośas* are described in ascending order, it is not tightly bound by a hierarchy of function. This is because they interweave each other as they interpenetrate the spheres they issue from. Yoga’s cataloguing of the *kośas* moves from the initial gross sheath, the *annamayakośa* constituted by food, to the *ānandamayakośa*, or sheath of the bliss body. Next is the *prāṇamayakośa*, the sheath of the life force residing in the subtle inner psychological level of vital energy and often equated with the affective. Then there is the *manomayakośa*, the sheath of the mind or mental functioning, the *vijñānamayakośa*, the sheath of awareness, producing intuition and based in the causal spiritual ground-of-being, and lastly the *ānandamayakośa*, the subtle and inner most sheath of the bliss body (Roeser 2005, p. 312).

In Yoga this schema is conflated with the principle that the bodily system comprises a gross body – the *sthūlaśarīra* – and a subtle body or *sūkṣma-śarīra*. An understanding of these two aspects of the body, the taxonomy of the *kośas* and the interweaving processes of the *guṇas* (described below), supports a view of the body as a “psychophysical continuum encompassing both gross physical constituents and subtle psychic faculties” (ibid.). This body, made of matter, breath, mind, consciousness and bliss, is a corporeal and numinous system created by interrelational processes that are illustrative of the *feeling nexus*.

The triguṇa a model analogous with the feeling nexus

The Yogic model of the *triguṇa*, or triad of the three *guṇas*, is analogous with the *feeling nexus* and is outlined here to illustrate its form and processes. The *triguṇa* is an inherently interrelational force, consisting of *sattva* (purity, beingness), *rajas* (activity, movement) and *tamas* (inertia, darkness). The mutual interweaving of these three fundamental forces is said to create all ontological levels of reality⁹⁶ (Feuerstein 1990, p. 122). The ecological form of the *triguṇa* most clearly demonstrates its similarity to the *feeling nexus*, though they also correspond with each other through their shared theories of causation, the conception of them as *feeling-substances*, and the presence, in both, of an inherent teleological drive.

The *feeling nexus* and the *triguṇa* carry their causes with them. When the *guṇas* leave their origins in the primal equilibrium of *puruṣa* (transcendental self) and *prakṛti* (Nature or creation), they not only retain aspects of *prakṛti*, but their original cause, *Brahman*. Causation (*satkāryavāda*) in the *triguṇa* is apparent through the metamorphosis of the *guṇas* from their resting formless state through to their manifestation of all form. In this transition they are said to take their original form with them, which is their initial state of equilibrium (*avyakta*), or the “‘noumenal’ condition of *prakṛti*” (Rao 1966, p. 55). The *guṇas*, while separate from *prakṛti*, are also in a sense aspects of it, which is why they are known as *tri-guṇa-sāmya-avasthā* (the state of equilibrium of the three *guṇas*). The *guṇas* remain in this state of transcendental

⁹⁶ While these definitions are used here, it is important to note that there are multiple understandings of the *guṇas*, which have generally been developed through a correlation of two fundamental meanings.⁹⁶ Firstly, *guṇas* as psychic or moral conditions, and secondly, *guṇas* as “factors involved in the unmanifest and manifest worlds” (Larson 1998, pp.162, 163).

equilibrium until unsettled by *prakṛti* as it approaches *puruṣa*, which then awakens them. They then leave *avyakta* carrying their cause (*prakṛti*) with them as they engage their continual intersection of each other in the creation of manifest existence. Much like the *guṇas*, the *feeling nexus* carries its source (its ubiquitous ecological substrate) with it, which can be seen in the co-researchers' *feeling* of an inherent interrelational ground in the deep contemplative states that can lead to realisation of the *feeling nexus*.

The second aspect of the *guṇas* which directly links them with the *feeling nexus* is the portrayal of them as *feeling substances*. This conception of the *guṇas* is similar to the understanding of *feelings* developed in this project, where they are more than psychophysical affective phenomenon. The Sanskrit scholar Surendranath Dasgupta (1968) describes the *guṇas*⁹⁷ as 'feeling-substances' (p. 242) and the "earliest track of consciousness" (p. 243). In his development of the ontology of the *guṇas*, Dasgupta has created an approach that is posited on a typology of levels of being, starting with an elemental state that both contains and 'is' the *guṇas*. His approach is supported by an understanding of *feeling* as both an initiatory force and a sensory or *feeling* substance. This is based on the *Sāṃkhya* tenet that 'substance' and 'quality' are the same thing, as Dasgupta states, "every unit of quality is but a unit of substance" (ibid.). Because of this they can be transmuted, which is what he alludes to in the progressive transformation of the 'quality' of the *feeling substance* in his schema. This starts with the *feeling substance* as a rudimentary *feeling mass* that exists in all the levels, which then evolves as it continues to be experienced. Dasgupta claims that initial engagement can be experienced as an encounter with a 'crude' manifestation that doesn't directly appear in cognition though is *felt* pre-verbally. An intermediary stage follows in which the *feeling* may be partly worded and lastly, it is worded or becomes a 'substance' at a fully cognitive level. This passage from the prefigurative to cognitive is illustrative of a progression through similar stages that the co-researchers experienced in the *contemplative trajectory*.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Dasgupta's (1968) interpretation of the *guṇas* is drawn from *Sāṃkhya*⁹⁷ philosophy, one of the six schools of Indian philosophy, which also includes Yoga philosophy. His propositions are based on a fundamental *Sāṃkhya* tenet, which suggests that all forms, including thought and matter, are considered to be a product of the interactions of the *guṇas*. In reference to this, Dasgupta describes the *guṇas* as "things-in-themselves, the ultimate substances of which consciousness and gross matter are made up" (1968, p. 243).

⁹⁸ This schema of moving from the pre-figurative to cognitive is detailed in Chapters Six to Eight.

The third way in which the *guṇas* parallel the *feeling nexus* is the shared ‘modifying’ or teleological force, which underpins their defining continuous ‘drawing in’ activities. In the case of the *feeling nexus* it combines the four modes of being, while the *guṇas* engage in a constant interweaving of themselves to create all reality. The understanding of a teleological force underpinning these processes is founded on Hindu cosmology, which understands that reality is produced by *Brahman*, the cause both inherent in and beyond all manifestation. It is this *compresence* of the transcendent and manifest in all form that produces an unremitting force, “which when brought in...[to]...mutual contact produces a magnetic current” (Avalon 2003, p. xxvii). This power is an inherent pattern or teleology, and I suggest the force or ‘duality in unity’ (ibid.) that is also at work in the *feeling nexus*.

Dasgupta’s thesis regarding the formation of this drive provides a useful account that can be applied to the conceptualisation of the *feeling nexus*. He claims that the force created by the compresence of the two opposing aspects contained in *Brahman* is able to split *prakṛti*’s undifferentiated state of equilibrium. Importantly, inherent in this state are the potential forms of the *guṇas*. Dasgupta speculates that the separation of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* is due to the “(nonmechanical) influence of *puruṣa*...there is inherent in the *guṇas* a teleology that all their movements or modifications should take place in such a way that these may serve the purposes of the *puruṣas*” (Dasgupta 1968, p. 248). The intense energy, both latent and active in *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*’s continuous relationship, is a force that creates an ongoing cycle of creation and dissolution, of activity and quiescence (*pralaya*).⁹⁹ This shared drive that is common to the *guṇas* and the *feeling nexus*, the conception of them as *feeling substances*, and the theories of causation implicit in both, offers valuable insight into the structure and processes of the *feeling nexus*.

⁹⁹ This cycle mirrors the *saṃsāric* cycle of the phenomenal world, sometimes pictured as the wheel of life, turning through a constant flux of life, death and rebirth, which continues to turn through spiritual ignorance (*avidyā*). Its six spokes are virtue (*dharma*) and vice (*adharmā*), pleasure (*sukha*) and pain (*duḥkha*), attachment (*rāga*) and aversion (*dveṣa*) (Feuerstein 1990, p. 308).

Interrelationality in phenomenology

The Yogic development of the body through the schemas of the *guṇas* and the *kośas* is similar to Merleau-Ponty's understanding of bodily being via proprioception, in which the body is said to be an "amalgam: not only matter and not wholly ideality but found somewhere in the relation between the two" (Salamon 2006, p. 98). Gayle Salamon's generalisation of proprioception to a process through which we apprehend and make sense of our bodies (ibid) extrapolates the direct definition, which is the sense of the relative position of neighboring parts of the body.¹⁰⁰ It is useful when speaking of its lived experience to include the other two primary senses that make up the 'felt knowing' of the body. These are the exteroceptive senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch) through which we perceive the outside world,¹⁰¹ and the interoceptive senses, which are any sense normally stimulated from within the body. Proprioception, exteroception and interoception form a trinity (PEIT) of somatic perception with which we meditate the feeling of our body, the border between it and the world, and the immaterial or the "something that exceeds our senses" (ibid.).

Salamon posits the ability to shift beyond the physical and intangible as a result of the processes of proprioception, and I suggest the PEIT's processes. This is also possible through Yoga's understanding of the body as a 'psychophysical continuum' comprising the five sheaths (*pañcakośas*) and *sthūlaśarīra* and *sūkṣmaśarīra* (Holdrege 1998, p. 346). When the entwinings or exchanges between these different aspects of the body are sensed in contemplation, the adherent may experience their body as a bridge between the corporeal and numinous, or a "hinge between the material and the phantasmatic, the physiological and the psychic the present and the absent" (Salamon 2006, p. 98).

This phenomenological conception of pre-predicative aspects of the body, which mirrors something similar in Yoga's ontology of the body, is characterised by Merleau-Ponty's suggestion of bodily ambiguity. He proposes that the parts of the body are not

¹⁰⁰ This inner monitoring is believed to result from the combining of information from sensory neurons located in the inner ear and the stretch receptors located in the muscles, and the joint-supporting ligaments (Nettl-Fiol & Vanier 2011, p. 96).

¹⁰¹ Neurologists posit at least another six senses, including nociception (pain), equilibrioception (balance), kinaesthesia (joint movement and acceleration), chronoception (the sense of time), thermoception (sense of temperature differences) and magnetoception (ability to detect a magnetic field) (Henshaw 2012).

defined objects but ‘potentialities’, a “nexus of living meanings, not the law for a certain number of covariant terms” (Merleau-Ponty in Salamon 2006, p. 100). This body is able to move beyond itself into the ‘phantasmatic’ by expanding out of the borders of its skin in the act of perception. In Yoga the body is able to do this because it is considered a microcosm *kṣudra-brahmāṇḍa* (little cosmos)¹⁰² of the macrocosmic divine (*Brahman*), which interpenetrates it and all reality. Further, it can engage the extrasensory because it is a locus of all levels of existence through the interactions of the *kośas*. The interlinking aspects of the body are enabled by the *kośa*’s interspersion of it, and Yoga’s understanding that “the mind, along with other psychic faculties is represented as a subtle form of embodiment” (Holdrege 1998, p. 347). These Yogic and phenomenological understandings provide for a body made permeable by its interrelational form.

The permeable somatic mode of being

I propose that there is an aspect of the body, existent as a state of bodily ‘pre-knowing’ (Merleau-Ponty 1968) that can be conceived of as a permeable somatic mode of being. Firstly, I use the terms ‘modes of being’ and ‘modes of human experience’ to mean the spectrum of experience within the domains of the somatic, cognitive, affective and transcendent.¹⁰³ I envisage different levels of the modes, and focus here on a pre-predicative level of the somatic, one that exists in a silent perceptual world, which is “an order where there are non-language significations...but they are not accordingly *positive*...there are fields and a field of fields, with a style and a typicality” (Merleau-Ponty 1968, p. 171). Merleau-Ponty’s suggestion of ‘another order’, present in an inter-dimensional field comprising multiple intersecting fields, offers a way to conceive of different levels of the modes of being. This section focuses on the permeable aspect of the somatic mode that can be experienced in the “world of silence” (ibid.) or bodily pre-knowing.

This project’s conception of a permeable aspect of this and other modes of being is founded on the co-researchers’ experiences of a *contemplative synaesthesia* or their

¹⁰² Translation by Burley 2000, p. 144.

¹⁰³ Outlining human experience in this way is an attempt to broadly articulate aspects of a range of experience, not to suggest that these are the only modes of being.

sense of the combining of the somatic, cognitive, affective and transcendent modes. What the co-researchers described required a more refined level of experience of the modes of being, one where these modes became permeable, so providing for the *contemplative synaesthesia* that the co-researchers regularly described. They outlined it in various ways - some spoke of a sense of the internal space of their bodies expanding, while others described the outer skin-rims of their bodies dissolving, or thinning of the borders between the inner and outer sense of their body. Some recounted the sense of emotions and thoughts being located in particular areas of their bodies, others their transcendent or transpersonal experiences of merging with something bigger than themselves, and others still of *feeling gestalts* of the modes of being, all of which I believe result from the processes of the *feeling nexus*.

Merleau-Ponty provides for these sorts of somatic experience through his development of perception and the *flesh* ontology. This starts with his suggestion that perception already exists in and therefore permeates all that is perceived. What is seen and touched, sees and touches back because “our flesh lines and even envelops all the visible and tangible things with which nevertheless it is surrounded, the world and I are within one another, and there is no anteriority of the *percipere* to the *percipi*” (Merleau-Ponty 1968, p. 123). The maturing of perception in the folding over and into of the *perceiving* and *perceived*, or its turning back upon itself in the chiasmic reversibility of perception, occurs because *flesh* allows a “new type of being...[a]...being by porosity, pregnancy, or generality” (Merleau-Ponty 1968, p. 149). It is this ‘porous’ being I suggest that is illustrative of the permeable somatic mode. The perception of this being is likened to an “organ of conception” (Kirby 2006, p. 134) in which the immanence of *flesh* bursts forth:

...a sort of dehiscence [which] opens my body in two, and because between my body looked at and my body looking, my body touched and my body touching, there is overlapping or encroachment, so that we must say that the things pass into us as well as we into the things (Merleau-Ponty 1968, p. 123).

Kelly Oliver (1998), following Merleau-Ponty, describes this as the ‘thickness’ of *flesh* that is the permeability or intercorporality of the body, as it allows the transference of perception from the perceiver to the perceived and vice versa. This understanding of

the interweaving of the toucher-touched-touching is described in Merleau-Ponty's much quoted:

If my left hand can touch my right and while it palpates the tangibles, can touch it touching, can turn its palpation back upon it, why, when touching the hand of another, would I not touch in it the same power to espouse the things that I have touched in my own? (1968, p. 141).

The permeable somatic mode in Yoga

The interspersion or permeability of the perceiver and perceived can be found in Yoga's understanding of a permeable body. However, its schema of intercorporality differs from phenomenology's because it is predicated on the system of the *pañca-kośa* and its original constitution in the divine absolute of *Brahman*. The interrelationality of *Brahman*,¹⁰⁴ described in various sections of this project and expanded here, occurs through its interpenetration of all reality, including the processes of the *guṇas*, the three primary constituents of material reality. In addition the interweaving processes of the *guṇas* are related to similar processes of the *kośas* through their shared conception in *Brahman*. This is apparent in the activity of the seven major *cakras* or sites of consciousness in the body, which transform the universal energy of *Brahman*. The *cakras* are conceptualised as major energy centres, and are said to be located near related glands and nerve bundles. Their function is to transmute the energy of *śakti*¹⁰⁵ (power), which is drawn from the universal *Brahman* into the *pañca-kośa*. The contracting of *śakti*'s energy into the form of the *kośas* is outlined by Robert Roeser:

This stepping down produces the various sheaths (*kośas*) that comprise the human being (causal-spiritual; subtle-psychological; gross-physical), the four states of consciousness associated with these sheaths (*tuṛīya*; deep sleep and dream; waking) and the dimensions of personality that operate within these

¹⁰⁴ *Brahman* is essentially formless and unknowable, though some *Vedantic* schools distinguish between a 'lower' (*apara*) and higher (*para*) aspect of *Brahman*. While both can be understood to contain *puruṣa* (pure consciousness) and *prakṛti* (nature or creation), it is the *apara* form of *Brahman* that most directly produces them.

¹⁰⁵ *Śakti* is the animating, creative principal in all existence and is envisioned as both, pure energy in all manifest reality including the adherent's body, and the personification of the divine feminine. *Śakti* is inseparable from *Śiva* the male form, who is also one aspect of the triad of Hindu gods: *Śiva*, *Viṣṇu*, and *Brahmā* (Feuerstein 1990, pp. 322-323).

sheaths and states (awareness; ego-mind and organs of sensation/action; body), respectively. (2005, p. 342)

Tracing the interweaving of the *cakras*, *guṇas* and *kośas* through the body, and their origins in the transcendence of *Brahman*, reveals an elaborate correspondence between these three energetic principals. Each resides in and outside the body for there is an “analogy between the living body (microcosm) and the surrounding world (macrocosm)” (Zimmermann in Langford 1995, p. 336). The reflection of the macrocosm, both worldly and transcendent, through the microcosmic body should not be misunderstood as a process that occurs between two dichotomous states. Rather, as Jean Langford (1995) proposes, the Yogic body, which is fluid and penetrable, comprises aspects that are “folded [one] into the other in convoluted ways” (p. 336). Langford’s definition outlines something similar to the way that the body in phenomenology is made permeable by *flesh*.

Yoga’s schema of somatic interrelationality describes a body made permeable through the *kośas* intersection of the body and its contexts. Similarly, the body that Merleau-Ponty constructs through *flesh*, or the tissue of relationality, is made porous by its continual enfolding processes. Contemplative experience of the permeable aspect of the somatic mode, outlined in both of these ontologies, can lead to experiences of the *feeling nexus*. The deep somatic focus that can arise in contemplation facilitates engagement with the *feeling nexus* because both this aspect of the somatic and the *feeling nexus* have interrelational forms. It is this correspondence that allows the *feeling nexus* to interweave the permeable somatic mode with the other permeable modes of being.¹⁰⁶

Stage one in summary

This phenomenological and Yogic examination of the body characterises the inherently permeable or ecological entity that the co-researchers experienced as they returned to it through contemplation. If they continued with their practices the deep somatic focus they developed appeared to open them to experiences of the subtle moments of interconnection in the multiple intertwining layers of themselves. This is possible in

¹⁰⁶ The permeable cognitive, affective and transcendent modes of being are described in later chapters.

phenomenology via its ontologies of *flesh* and the *chiasm*, and in Yoga through the interrelationality of the *guṇas*, the *kośas* and the *tadātmya* (sameness) of the adherent and *Brahman*. The correspondence drawn between the *guṇas* and the *feeling nexus* supports a deeper understanding of the form and mechanisms of the *feeling nexus*, while the development of the permeable somatic mode of being demonstrates the way in which contemplative somatic experience can lead to the *feeling* of the intertwining processes of the *feeling nexus*.

The relevance of this body in contemplative education starts with its challenge to the Cartesianism in much of mainstream education. Its ecology resolves the body/mind, subjective/objective divide, while highlighting the importance of somatic knowing in education. The significance of the return to the body for the co-researchers' learning was confirmed by their regular descriptions of its positive outcomes. Their reports of focused and balanced states fundamental to learning, examined through dance pedagogy and the co-researchers' experiences, highlights important links between somatic focus and contemplative education.

Stage two: The deepening of internal senses

This section introduces the second of the five stages of the co-researchers' trajectory through contemplation. It is the identification of, and growing familiarity with, internal senses or the *learning of feelings*. While *learning feelings* is a process that occurs in each of the *contemplative trajectory's* stages, and is examined in detail in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight, this section looks specifically at an initial phase of *learning feelings* through the co-researchers' reports from contemplation.¹⁰⁷ After they returned to their bodies, and if they developed a regular contemplative practice, their partial sensing of inner *feelings*, bounded by the body, heightened as they became more familiar with their internal landscapes. This led to deepening of their contemplative experience, which while grounded in the somatic, also engaged other modes of being.

¹⁰⁷ *Learning feelings* can occur in, and across the *contemplative trajectory*, though these instances of it in the phases of the trajectory may not involve the complete three-tier process of pre-predicative, embodied and cognitive learning.

The co-researchers' increasingly refined inner perception also drew their awareness to an interrelational presence. It is described in both sections of this chapter through the conflation of phenomenology, Yoga and neurophenomenology. The co-researchers' encounters with the interrelational are significant for they indicate a deepening of their contemplative focus and their preliminary encounters with the *feeling nexus*. An important outcome of these early experiences of the *feeling nexus* was the co-researchers' attempts to translate pre-figurative experience through affective, somatic, cognitive and transcendent stages. These experiences, which are examined in this section, introduce the co-researchers' transitioning from nonverbal *feelings* to cognitive assimilation. This is a pivotal aspect of the transformation or learning facilitated by contemplative engagement with the *feeling nexus*. In addition, their initial pre-figurative sense of the *feelings* substantiated the new (cognitive) meanings that they made of their contemplative experience.

Initial stages of learning feelings

The *feelings*¹⁰⁸ that the co-researchers had in contemplation are understood here to be more than the affective, rather as Heron (1992) outlines, they are a grounding level of personhood. While there appears to be an inherent ability to learn these *feelings*

¹⁰⁸ The understanding of *feelings*, *learning feelings*, *feeling languages* and *maps* has primarily been developed in this project through the phenomenological analysis of the co-researchers' reports. In addition, phenomenological and Yogic theory underpin my creation of these terms and the concepts underlying them. John Heron's proposition of 'feelings' as a 'resonance of being' and his overview of feelings in his *Feelings and Personhood* (1992) has also supported the formulation of these concepts. In addition to Heron's work in this area, the neuroscientist Antonio Damasio (2000) develops a 'feeling self' in his *The feeling of what happens: Body and emotion in the making of consciousness*, which has some similarity to the way that the co-researchers described themselves in contemplation. However, this project's examination of *feelings* as gestalts of four modes of being diverges from Damasio's investigation of "how that brain substrate of feeling could become *known* to the organism having the emotion" (2000, p. 8).

The psychologist and philosopher Eugene Gendlin's creation of the psychotherapeutic method of 'focusing', detailed in his *Focusing: How to gain direct access to your body's knowledge* (2010), includes what he calls the 'felt sense'. His proposition of a felt sense preceding and supporting the cognitive resonates with my suggestion that pre-predicative *feelings* underpin the cognitive. His psychotherapeutic examination of one of his patient's negative feelings outlines this, "George accepts his feelings, but this is not enough. Just getting in touch with one's feelings often brings no change, just the same feeling over and over. One must let a larger, wider, unclear felt sense form...George had said, 'it would be awful'...[though]...we didn't yet know what there was in and with this 'awful.' To find out, and to let it shift, the whole vague body sense of all that goes with 'awful' had to form for him" (Gendlin 2010, p. 29). This concept of a preconscious 'body sense' in Gendlin's work is relevant in this study, as is his suggestion that there is a deeper 'bodily knowledge' or physically sensed 'murky zone' (Gendlin 2010, p. viii) that underpins thoughts and memories. However, unlike this project, Gendlin's thesis does not include an elemental gestalt process or substrate founding learning.

through contemplation, how we do this is unclear. However, gaining an understanding of the interrelational nature of the ecological body, as it is experienced in contemplation, provides a starting point. It appears that the quietening of discursive thought and the development of deep focus through contemplation enables somatic access to the more subtle and interrelational processes and levels of the interior. Eunice, a yoga teacher in Los Angeles, spoke of her experience of different internal levels in her yogic meditation:

So, I'm just repeating the mantra and it feels like I'm still thinking stuff. I do often end up thinking a lot of stuff about planning you know – sometimes you do kind of need to be still to have some high-quality thoughts and I like, go with them for a while, then I'm like ok now you've got to bring the attention back...You know I can still kind of hear myself repeating the mantra even while I'm thinking other things...it somehow seems like I'm switching back and forth...But then quite often when I'm done I get up and I usually feel pretty good to start the day. I think it's the kind of thing you don't really notice while you're doing it but it does feel nice to be still. (Interview, 22nd October, 2009)

Similarly, the contemplative experiences that Baden had as she progressed through James Morley's Yoga Psychology course at Ramapo College illustrate the refinement of her ability to *feel* her interior. However, as a practitioner new to yoga she struggled with ways to translate her *feelings*. In her first experiences of the *āsanas* (postures), *prāṇāyāma*¹⁰⁹ (breath control) and *mantra*¹¹⁰ repetition, she wasn't able to find the stillness that Eunice describes. Baden said, "I can't stop my brain from moving around" (Interview, 10th December, 2009), however, as she continued in the course she found that the *prāṇāyāma* exercises helped with her anxiety:

Yeh, cause, it's kind of like having a panic attack when you have all of the breathing from here (she touches the top of her chest), it's really fast and quick...if you start doing high chest breathing that will give you more anxiety, so if you can slow your breathing down that can be really helpful. So like

¹⁰⁹ *Prāṇāyāma* or breath control is the fourth limb of the eight-fold path detailed in Patanjali's *Yoga Sūtras*. *Prāṇa* is breath and *āyāma* extension – the aim in *prāṇāyāma* is to extend and control the breath so as to control the movement of the mind (Feuerstein 1990, p. 267).

¹¹⁰ Sound, syllable, word or groups of words repeated to gain spiritual transformation.

breathing, if you just change your breathing you can change your emotions and your cognitive thinking and stuff like that. (ibid.)

From these experiences of *prāṇāyāma* Baden began to re-enter her body, which she described as, “I guess you could just feel like...I don’t know how to explain how you feel different, uhmm...it’s more like just a heaviness of like your heart.” (ibid.). Then at the end of the course, when the group did a *mantra* repetition practice,¹¹¹ she spoke of shifting from feeling uncomfortable to *feeling* ‘vibrations’ and ‘refreshing feelings’:

I guess I just like the meditating, uhmm, or weirdly, I kind of enjoy the chanting aspects, I don’t know, it kind of makes me feel at peace. I don’t know why it does, it’s like the vibrations I guess, which I’m really surprised about, I didn’t think I would like it at all. Or I didn’t think I would really feel anything, or like benefit from it at all. But, uhm, at the end of the chanting I felt good...it just feels, I don’t know, I can’t really describe it, uhmm – kind of just like a refreshing feeling. (ibid.)

The possible reason that Baden had difficulty expressing the *feelings* in her yoga practice are outlined by Cassandra Vieten director of research at the Institute of Noetic Sciences (IONS) at IONS in 2009. Vieten spoke of the way in which yoga and other contemplative practices can lead to a subtle state of consciousness, which she described as our ‘natural state of awareness’. However, she emphasised that this state has become atrophied and almost lost in the West:

And we’re so in the West particularly almost incapable, we’re all almost crippled in that ability. We really don’t have the capacity to sit with what is, even delaying action or decision for 10 minutes, is hard for most of us...That kind of mindfulness is just a foundational building block of mental and emotional health, and thus physical health... training in this ability, which is really a part of our natural inheritance, is just so undertrained that we have to relearn it, just like a language or an instrument. (Interview, 7th November, 2009)

¹¹¹ The mantra they repeated was Pātañjali’s second *sūtra*, *yogaścittavṛttinirodhaḥ*, which loosely translates as: ‘Yoga is the practice of stopping the whirls of mindstuff’.

Students in Morley's class, and others that I interviewed, appeared to be doing just that, retraining their ability to *feel* through contemplation in the initial stages of *learning feelings*.

Starting to *feel* the intertwining levels

As the co-researchers became more familiar with their inner landscapes they began to *feel* themselves as a 'dividual',¹¹² or "a constellation of substances and processes that is connected to other bodies through a complex network of transactions" (Holdrege 1998, p 349). Neville, a Sanskrit student at LMU, spoke of sensing interconnecting levels in meditation as his focus deepened, "I think all of the fields are really all a part of the same field and in a deep meditation it all sort of comes together" (Interview, 2nd November, 2009). The interrelationality or merging of fields that Neville *felt* as his focus deepened is similar to an 'interlinking' of the somatic, cognitive and affective that Heather described when she explained how she thought Yoga worked:

I think one of the things about it is that we hold our bodies in certain ways, which are long standing, maybe we've hurt ourselves or maybe it's because we cross our arms and hold on tight because we're fearful, and I think that there are some emotional reasons that we hold our bodies in certain ways and I think that yoga gets you to relax those habitual postures that may have some emotional thing attached to them. (Interview, 24th November, 2009)

Similarly Catherine, a past student of Professor Chapple's and a yoga teacher in Los Angeles, spoke of an interlinking of the modes of being when she explained the way that *prāṇāyāma* (breath control) worked to join body and mind. She said, "somehow using your breath brings your sense of yourself into your body" (Interview, 12th October, 2009).

J. Lowell Lewis (1995), in his appraisal of Leder's delineation of two modes of embodiment, termed something comparable to the co-researchers' *feeling* of these intertwinings, an 'intermediate mode'. This mode bridges 'ecstasies' or instrumental engagement, and 'dys-appearance', which is the appearance of the taken-for-granted

¹¹² McKim Marriott in Holdrege, 1998, p. 349.

body. Lewis believes that the intermediate state or mode is accessed by individuals who perform concentrated embodied practices such as athletics, dancing, martial arts, and, I suggest, yoga. In these practices, he claims that the body becomes an instrument out of which action can issue from a more ‘essential self’, where one “acts *from* the self *to* the body” (Lewis 1995, p. 229) while monitoring the process. Lewis’s development of this bridging state, which intersperses the somatic and is perceived in contemplation, provides one example of the interweaving levels of awareness that can be experienced as focus deepens in the *contemplative trajectory*.

Interrelational forces: The feeling nexus and the legein

The co-researchers’ experience of moving through levels of the interior in contemplation suggests an interrelational force drawing them through. In this project that is the *feeling nexus*, which is analogous with the *legein*, a pivotal concept in Martin Heidegger’s work on language. In his presentation of foundational aspects of the *legein* and its field or net-like structure, Krzysztof Ziarek (1994) claims that the:

legein prestructures (in a verbal sense) the interval of the address and, as the very principle of gathering, lays open the ‘invisible’ mesh (*Geflecht*) of relations (*Bezüge*)...[it is]...the meshing that makes possible relations and difference, the interlacing that ‘underprints’ itself, and thus is neither present nor absent in the empirical manifestations of language. (ibid.)

While the *legein*’s activities relate to language and motility, and those of the *feeling nexus* to four modes of human experience, they have a number of similarities. They are both elemental ‘drawing together’ processes that reside in a pre-ontological ground-of-being. They can more easily be experienced in reflective or contemplative states of consciousness, and their frequent ineffability means they are largely known indirectly through their outcomes. The *legein* and *feeling nexus* also parallel each other through the corresponding processes of transformation that they actuate. For the *feeling nexus*, this starts in the practitioners’ prefigurative *feeling* of it. Following this initial immersive experience is an intermediary stage, which has a somatic focus and can be difficult to describe, and then the wording or cognitive assimilation of the experience.

In Heidegger's development of language, the workings of the *legein* follow a similar process that includes precognitive, somatic and cognitive stages. This starts with its 'seeding' of the *logos*, followed by its gathering, then laying forth, and return to seeding. Its cycling through these stages is explained in David Kleinberg-Levin's (1985) investigation of the *legein* in motility. He starts by introducing a two-fold *legein*, the original primordial *legein* of the *logos*¹¹³ and the *legein* of the *mortal logos*, which is revealed in articulatory gesture. The mortal *legein* is seeded by a primordial experience of being, which is the *legein* of the *logos*. In his discussion of this process, Kleinberg-Levin presents the term *homologein*, which Heidegger uses to describe the essential character of each individual's *logos*, or their individual articulatory capacity (the mortal *logos*). The articulatory capacity is a latency within the individual that can respond to the "claim primordially laid down for us by the *Legein* of the *Logos*...[our own]...unique grace in motility" (Kleinberg-Levin 1985, p. 118). It comes into being through the cycling process of the *legein* when it "lets itself be overpowered by the predominant [ontological] sense, but only in order to deposit [i.e., lay down] the essence of saying and talking" (ibid.). The *legein*'s 'depositing' of itself in this way produces the interrelationality or ecology of the *legein of the logos* and the *legein of the mortal logos*. The latter "lies secured in the *Logos*" (ibid.), and when the original *legein* releases itself into the senses, the mortal *legein* is 'dispatched' to the *logos*. This seeding process, or the *legein*'s interpenetration of the senses, may be similar to the way that the results of the *feeling nexus* process enter the practitioner's sensory and cognitive awareness. For it can be argued that the depositing of the results of the *feeling nexus* are illustrated in the co-researchers' *contemplative synaesthetic* experience of the interweaving or merging of modes of being. This is possible because of the pre-existence of the *legein* and the *feeling nexus* in their respective domains.

Heidegger proposes that the pre-existence of the *legein* (through the *logos*) is most clearly sensed in a space that he describes as the "between of hearing and speaking" (Ziarek 1994, p. 35). This liminal and reflective state is a place of *hearing* before words for the *legein*, and the space of *feeling* before words for the *feeling nexus*. It is a preverbal twilight described by Krzysztof Ziarek as the "hearing that goes toward the *logos*, the hearing that happens within *legein* as *legein* itself" (ibid.). Ziarek's reference

¹¹³ Kleinberg-Levin (1985) after Heidegger defines the *primordial legein of logos* as "nothing other than the essence of unification, which assembles everything in its totality of simple presencing" (p. 120).

to the presence of a foundational space/state, which contains the quality of the perception it underpins, reveals the contradiction of the *legein* and the *feeling nexus* as pre-hearing or pre-feeling. For the outcomes of both, or the actual ‘hearing’ or ‘feeling’, happens as though against their elemental being. Nevertheless, even though the *legein*’s activities remain irreducible to language, and the processes of the *feeling nexus* irreducible to the changes attributed to contemplation, the *legein* and the *feeling nexus* remain linked to the material manifestations that they underpin.

Frequently the *feeling nexus* and the *legein* are not only ineffable but *unfelt*, outside of contemplative states such as the intermediary zone described earlier. I am suggesting that the contemplative state acts as this boundary state in which processes like the *legein* and the *feeling nexus* can be *felt*. This was demonstrated by the co-researchers who were experienced contemplative practitioners, for they spoke of a growing awareness of the deepening layers of their subjective internal processes as they became more proficient in their practices. Kleinberg-Levin (1985) outlines a refined phenomenological awareness analogous with the contemplative state in his proposition that the *legein* is “confirmed by our motility – that if we cultivate a phenomenologically vigilant awareness in our motility, we will eventually encounter the *implicit* (ontological *legein*)” (1985, p. 140). He appears to be describing a form of moment-to-moment awareness or mindful meditation.

Further, he claims that it is possible through mindful reflection to “realize the thorough-going, on-going ‘interaction’ – one might even say the ‘interpenetration’ or ‘interweaving’ – of the immeasurable *Legein* of the primordial *Logos* and the measured *legein* of our own motility” (Kleinberg-Levin 1985, p. 142). The integration of these two forms of the *legein* through its fundamental processes, and I argue something similar in the *feeling nexus*, leads to change. As the primordial and the personal meet, or as the *legein* (and the *feeling nexus*), “touches our flesh, takes hold of our embodiment, outlines for us its measure, [so it] lays claim to our motivation” (Kleinberg-Levin 1985, pp. 142, 143). If one understands this to be the intrinsic motivation’ of *flow* or contemplation then it is clear how these deeply reflective states can positively impact learning.

Neurophenomenological intertwinings

Neurophenomenology provides a physiological illustration for these philosophical propositions and the co-researchers' contemplative somatic experiences. This starts with neurophenomenology's proposition that consciousness arises through interlinking body-mind-contextual fields. Its positing of dynamic systems linking all regions of being is supported by its proposal that consciousness happens simultaneously across the brain in different networked locations through translocational processes. Or as Lutz et al. (2007(b)) describe, "the neural activity crucial for consciousness most probably involves the transient and continual orchestration of scattered mosaics of functionally specialized brain regions" (p. 527). These translocational processes are thought to drive localised brain activities across the systemic landscape of the brain.

The interdisciplinary science of neurophenomenology developed alongside the neurodynamical approach to consciousness (Freeman 1999; Kelso 1995; Van Gelder 1998; Cosmelli et al. 2007), with both being founded on an understanding of the nervous system as a nonlinear, dynamic, interrelational complex. Specifically, neurons coalesce in spatiotemporal structures, which constantly form and dissipate throughout the brain. Freeman describes these processes as "organized disorder constantly changing with fluctuations across the edge of stability" (in Cosmelli et al. 2007, p. 737). This intrinsically dynamic process, which is continuously constructed through complex series of feedback loops, is illustrative of the *feeling nexus*.

In addition to this systemic understanding of the brain, there is a gestalt process underlying perception that is descriptive of the *feeling nexus*. It results from neurophenomenologists' multi-tiered interrelational conception of perception, which is thought by many to be more like hypothesis testing rather than a passive recovery of information. They define this perception as a 'preference process' in which the "limbic system through corollary discharges to all sensor cortices maintains an attentive expectancy of what is to come" (ibid.). This 'expectancy' or potential stimulus then confirms or rejects the hypothesis through a series of amplitude-modulation patterns of neural activity. It is a "multisensory convergence onto the entorhinal cortex...[which]...becomes the basis for the formulations of Gestalts underlying the unitary character of perception" (Cosmelli et al. 2007, p. 739). The results of this

gestalt process, which occurs via multiple feedback loops throughout the limbic system, are fed out into the body along the limbic-hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (LHPA) axis.¹¹⁴ At this stage, through the senses the body produces actions and/or reactions in the world and then back into the body, creating the ongoing feedback loops that in a sense make the body permeable. The widespread integration and dissipation of neural activity that underlies perception provides another physiological illustration of the form and gestalt processes of the *feeling nexus*.

Angelica, a Yoga student and teacher in Los Angeles, spoke of an intersubjective experience with the members of her yoga classes that may result from processes analogous to those described by neurophenomenology:

it's just something that they know they are doing better, and one thing that I feel is so important is the relaxation part...and it makes me happy at the end of class when the 'om' is more resonant...sometimes I don't really know how to control it, but I just feel that everyone is in sync and many people afterwards say 'that's just what I needed'. And somehow I don't think we can do that for ourselves, so somehow just to come together and do it. That makes it more powerful. (Interview, 29th October, 2009)

Jason related a similar outcome in his yoga classes:

You can kind of almost read what's happening in that other person if you get sensitised enough? I mean it's a vibe that we can get wrong, but lots of times it's pretty obvious, some people call it *Social Wi-Fi*, have you heard of that? You know just the fact that you tune into what other humans are doing here and you sort of pick up their *buzz* and you come to their level. (Interview, 11th October, 2009)

The contemplative pedagogue Olen Gunnlaugson terms collective interrelational experiences like Jason's and Angelica's the "intersubjective dimension of

¹¹⁴ The LHPA (or HPA) is a complex set of feedback loops among the hypothalamus, the pituitary gland and the adrenal glands. The interaction among these glands constitutes the LHPA, which is a major part of the neuroendocrine system that regulates many bodily processes.

consciousness” (2009(a), p. 2). He believes that they result from students’ contemplative engagement in the “deep interiority of the group’s moment-to-moment experience of sharing meaning” (ibid.). Gunnlaugson frames his inquiry into the contemplative interior with Otto Scharmer’s theory of *presencing*, a term for a type of mindfulness created from the words ‘presence’ and ‘sensing’, “which refers to the ability to sense and bring into the present one’s highest future potential” (Scharmer 2011, ¶ 1). Gunnlaugson (2009(a)) uses Scharmer’s theory of presencing as the basis for the development of an intersubjective pedagogical framework for higher education instructors.

Gunnlaugson (2009(a)) advocates this type of deep focus or mindfulness in higher education based on his four primary research findings: firstly, that the intersubjective dimension of consciousness is significant in education; secondly, that it is necessary to use ‘sacred inquiry practices’ to raise collective forms of consciousness in education; thirdly, there are significant positive educational consequences for students and educators who come into *presence* with each other; and lastly, contemplative practices can be understood as a form of *deep* inquiry that facilitates the practitioners’ shared experiences of making meaning. Despite the predominant intersubjective focus of Gunnlaugson’s research, each of these findings is relevant in this project. The central tenets of his work parallel a number of those in this study, particularly his call for the inclusion of contemplative experience in pedagogy.

Interrelationality, ineffability and education

The co-researchers’ interrelational and intersubjective contemplative experiences suggest an inherent or elemental interweaving underpinning them. The physiological foundations for this experience may be those detailed by neurophenomenology, and associated sciences, while relevant philosophical theory is outlined above and throughout this project. These proposals plus the co-researchers’ reports indicate, I suggest, the presence of the *feeling nexus*. However, deeply subjective experience, such as *feeling* the *feeling nexus*, is often ignored in educational theory because of its proposed ineffability.

In challenging that notion I start with the two central and divergent approaches that frame the debate on the ineffability of subjective experience. One is described by the philosopher Peter Munz (1993) who concludes that since the age of Romanticism “subjective and individual experience is ineffable...these subjective states are essentially, not accidentally, inchoate and are not even articulable by the person who has them” (p. 41). His approach contrasts those defined by William Pinar’s (2009) reflection on John Dewey’s attempt to overcome the epistemological split between subject and object in education through Dewey’s focus on ‘lived experience’.

Pinar introduces Dewey’s use of the word *Erlebinis*, which contains the root for life or *Leben* that is often translated as ‘lived experience’. *Erlebinis* encompasses “what is being experienced as well as the subjective process of experiencing it” (Pinar 2009, p. 168). Dewey uses it to posit the intersection of the two sides of consciousness described by the term. This dual understanding of lived experience provides for the interweaving of the specificity and universality of each student’s academic life, as it denotes the “embodied, emotional, even ineffable engagement with the natural (in which is subsumed the human) world” (ibid.). Unlike Munz, Pinar through Dewey provides a way to accommodate the pre-figurative, embodied and cognitive aspects of students’ everyday experience. There are a number of educational theorists drawing from Dewey’s integrated approach who acknowledge the importance of the pre-predicative in education. They include but are not limited to Max van Manen’s (2007) account of pre-theoretical dimensions of practice in education; Susan Laird’s (1995) critique of the new scholarship on Dewey’s examination of the articulation of the inexpressible through art; Lynn Fendler’s (2012) analysis of the ineffable features of contemporary education; George Willis’ (2000) questioning of metaphor to describe the unwordable in art education.

The work of these theorists, plus the applied and theoretical research of this project contradicts suggestions that pre-predicative, subjective contemplative experience must remain mute because of its proposed ineffability. I suggest that if appropriate approaches and methods congruent with the contemplative are created, as I have done in this study, they can provide the means to translate *feelings* from the interior. Doing this will furnish useful information for the development of contemplative pedagogy and curricula. The need for this approach is suggested in the pedagogue Lynn Fendler’s

question: “[h]ow can I tell a true story – any story – about education when available language does not suffice” (2012, p. 4).

In her ‘figurative’ rather than representational approach Fendler calls for the introduction of the metaphorical in education. She contrasts representational education, underpinned by the structuralist assumption that meaning is represented by language, with the figurative. She links poststructuralist social theory, which takes the position that language is not representational, with the figurative, to propose a figurative pedagogy. It is an approach that doesn’t claim to represent meaning, but like figurative language “may catalyze, spark, inspire, generate, move, provoke, and/or persuade” (Fendler 2012, p. 9). A figurative approach in contemplative education would engage the metaphorical or *felt* languages that can arise from pre-figurative contemplative experience.

While Fendler’s pedagogical focus is educational ethics, rather than foundations of learning in contemplation, her introduction to the need for “language that gestures beyond and outside of itself” (ibid) is pertinent here. For the *feeling languages* that the co-researchers developed provide an example of such a ‘language’. This project’s examination of these *languages* further supports its central proposition that subjective contemplative experience is not ineffable. Its attempts to translate these languages of the interior provide a cogent starting point for the integration of this foundational aspect of learning into the development of comprehensive contemplative pedagogy.

Stage two in summary

The deepening of internal sensations or *feelings* often followed the co-researchers’ return to their bodies in the early stages of the *contemplative trajectory*. These *feelings*, framed by the body, were gestalts of the modes of being, and important in the co-researchers’ growing familiarity with their contemplative interiors. Propositions for the ways that their increasingly refined interior experience resulted in their contemplative engagement with the *gestalts* of the *feeling nexus* were developed in the examination of the *legein*. This process of integration, drawn from Heidegger’s examination of the primordial foundations of language, is correlated with the *feeling nexus* to explicate the co-researchers’ experience of a *contemplative trajectory*. In addition the shared

drawing-together processes of the *legein* and the *feeling nexus* are presented as the integrating drive that underpins the positive outcomes of contemplation in education. This is illustrated by Eunice's experience of contemplative practice in Morley's Yoga Psychology class. Initially she gained stress release, though found it hard to describe what she was *feeling*. As she continued in the class, and her contemplative somatic awareness became more refined, she began to describe internal sensations. Close to the end of the course, when she was more comfortable with the contemplative practices, Eunice began to enjoy their positive effects. Finally she was able to describe her pre-figurative *feelings* as 'vibrations', and by doing this grounded the experience in her somatic reality, which in turn reassured her of the benefits of contemplative practice.

The interrelationality present in Eunice's and many other co-researchers' contemplative experiences is important in this project because it indicates the ground and processes of the *feeling nexus*. Also, it highlights the need for pedagogy that acknowledges and engages the ecologies inherent in students', teachers' and educational relations and settings. The co-researchers *felt* this interrelationality in different ways, for some it arose in groups, while others had solitary experiences of it. Their experience was illustrated by the dynamic and interweaving neurological systems revealed by neurophenomenological research. This research and the theoretical and applied evidence in this section provides insight into the workings of the *feeling nexus*, the importance of the pre-predicative and embodied stages of learning through contemplation, and the need for pedagogy which is congruent with this fundamental aspect of contemplation. These insights are further supported by the positive changes that the co-researchers described, such as Heather's ability to release habitual negative patterns, Catherine's discovery of the sense of herself in her body, Baden's experience of 'refreshing feelings', and the reduced anxiety that Eunice described.

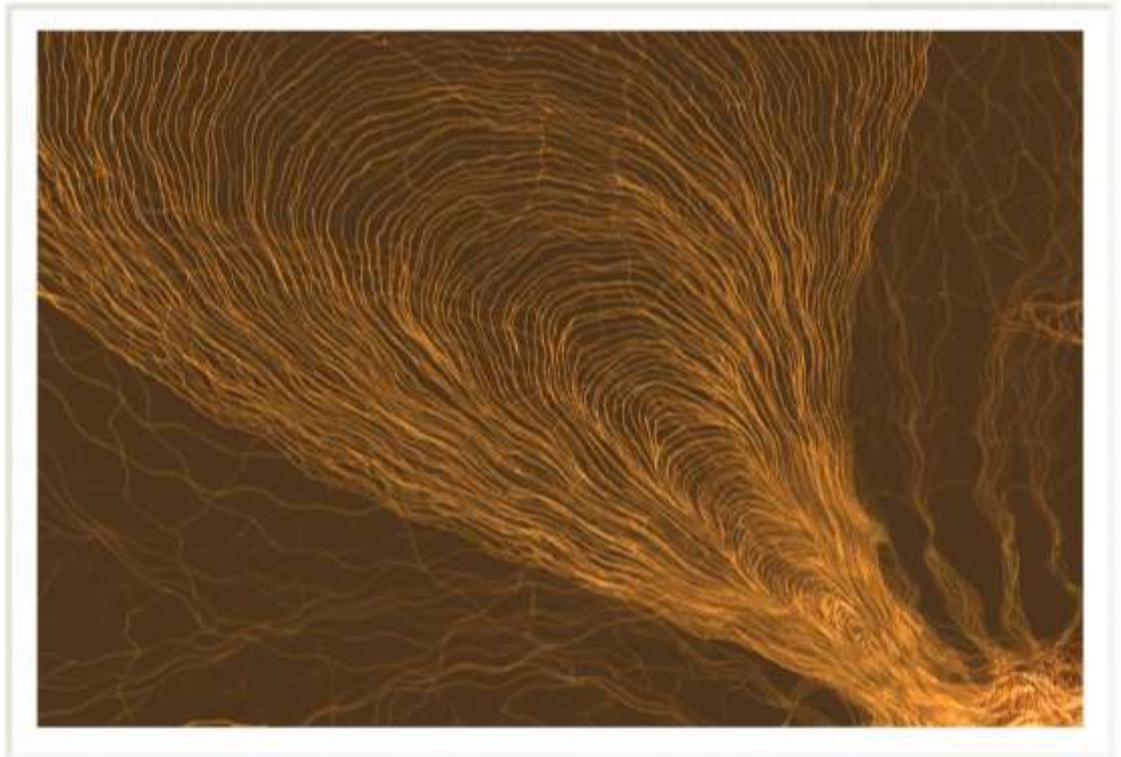
In summary

This chapter's examination of the first two stages of the *contemplative trajectory* emphasises the importance of the heightened somatic focus that can result from contemplation. The relevance of somatic awareness was detailed in the examination of the first stage through its focus on interrelationality and somatic pedagogy. The entwining experience that can arise from expanded bodily awareness in contemplation

evidences the ecology of the *feeling nexus* process, while it challenges the Cartesianism implicit in much mainstream education. Growing somatic awareness in the first stage of the *contemplative trajectory* supports the deepening awareness of internal *feelings* and the sense of moving through various layers of these *feelings* in the second stage. The co-researchers' increasing confidence with these feelings, or their *learning* of *feelings*, supported their passage through pre-predictive, somatic and cognitive stages of the new meaning they made from their contemplative educational experiences.

Stages three and four of the *contemplative trajectory* are analysed in the subsequent chapter. An investigation of the third stage in which the co-researchers experienced an expanded form of affectivity is followed by an examination of their altered perception of time and space, which frequently occurred as they became more familiar with their contemplative interior.

Chapter Four: Stages Three and Four of the *Contemplative Trajectory*: Enhanced Experiences of Affectivity and an Altered Sense of Space and Time



Cameron Beau Wylie Foster, 2013

And then that has that positive effect on you – this coming into agreement, it makes you feel your heart open and...hmm it's interesting...Like everything's vibrating at a certain level and then I've kind of started to vibrate at that same speed so I'm feeling it, and it just seems really, really beautiful. (Interview with Heather, 24th October, 2009)

The deeper and more refined the co-researchers' states of consciousness became in the *contemplative trajectory* the more they encountered atypical aspects of themselves. Through the middle of the trajectory, in stages three and four, some of the co-researchers' sense of affectivity expanded as it became imbued with other modes of being, while a number had altered perceptions of time and space. Heather in her quote above describes aspects of this altered sense of herself – as the feeling of 'coming into agreement', which opened her heart so that she resonated with her surroundings.

Stage three: Enhanced experiences of affectivity

The third of the five stages in the co-researchers' trajectory through contemplation was their *feeling* of an expanded state of affectivity. It frequently occurred after they returned to their bodies and became conversant with different internal sensations that they found in its deeper layers. It was at this stage that they began to experience affectivity as a 'sensitivity' that linked other modes of being. This was more than particular affectively coloured reactions or separately wired in responses to a specific set of stimuli;¹¹⁵ rather this affectivity was experienced as an integrated response of the whole "self-system" (Csikszentmihályi 1992, p 23). This concept of 'self' was developed by the psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihályi in reaction to psychological understandings of the self that were current in the late 1980s. At that time the affective and other modes of being were separated and impounded in order to study them, while the focus on emotion in the treatment of psychological disorders was on negative affective. Csikszentmihályi suggests that this approach resulted in an incomplete view

¹¹⁵ Affectivity is defined differently across the range of disciplines that engage it. In their *Handbook of emotion*, Lewis et al. (2010) detail accounts of emotion in philosophy, psychology, neurophysiology, sociology and other disciplines. They acknowledge that the definition of emotion is contested across each, stating that unifying these definitions "has proved to be as difficult to resolve as the emotions have been to master. Just when an adequate definition is in place, some new theory rears its unwelcome head and challenges our understanding" (Lewis et al. 2010, p. 3). In this project I am drawing from Heron's work in this area, Yogic and phenomenological conceptions, and a common understanding of emotion as subjective conscious experience often defined by types of emotion, such as happiness, sadness and anger.

of the individual, which he understands as a total system that “is actively trying to establish order in the contents of consciousness” (ibid).

Csikszentmihályi’s holistic definition alludes to a systemic conception of the individual. It supports this chapter’s examination of the co-researchers’ enhanced affectivity that led a number to the sense of themselves as interrelational. This section introduces a definition of the affective, derived from Edmund Husserl’s wide-ranging work on affectivity in which he describes it as an aspect of interrelational processes made up of time, subject and object. Following this definition, the co-researchers’ experiences of an affective field are advanced in relation to Merleau-Ponty’s *flesh* ontology and John Heron’s designation of the affective as a ‘field of experience’. Understandings of this field are developed pedagogically through individual interrelational and collective intersubjective experiences of it. This section then moves to the conception of a permeable mode of affectivity and onto Yogic and phenomenological interpretations of affectivity. Each approach highlights ways in which permeable affective experience can lead to experiences of the *feeling nexus*, and how this form of affectivity can be interwoven with the other modes by the *feeling nexus*.

Phenomenology and Yoga’s understandings of affectivity

Aspects of Husserl’s multivalent understanding of affectivity are introduced here to provide insight into the co-researchers’ experiences of an expanded affectivity. Although his concept of affectivity is protean (Behnke (2008(b))), it is primarily founded on two central contrasting aspects which he titles *feeling-affection* and *objectivating affection*. Both are framed by the understanding that emotion is something that “we ‘undergo’ rather than a matter of deliberate ‘doing’” (Behnke 2008(a), p. 47). The first aspect, *feeling affection* is the unfolding of affection that resonates with its surrounding affective atmosphere. This is a “constant background of subjective life and coalescing into the unity of a particular mood” (ibid.). *Objectivating affection* is a significant sensuous moment, an ultimate within the ongoing synthesis of the everyday engagement with objects of perception. Both these aspects of affectivity are important here, firstly, because they suggest a wider range of affectivity. Secondly, because *objectivating affection* illustrates the *feeling nexus*, through its form as “a nexus of constitutive performances whose correlate is an abiding transtemporal unity/identity offering further

possibilities of exploration” (ibid.). In this sense *objectivating affection* provides a model of an integrative force that affords moments of unity.

Having established these two realms of affectivity, Husserl added two categories of time, the first being *ichfremd*, which is a moment of time as a substance that pervades inner time-consciousness. The second is the ‘living event’, which is both the moment the subject is ‘affected’ within an assumed and continuous life-stream, and the expected response of the subject to that which affected it. According to Behnke, this latter synthesis of time and affectivity happens at a boundary between the subjective and objective, which impacts their ‘interarticulation’ (Behnke 2008(b)). This reading of time as an ‘event’ that contains affectivity and that occurs in the margins of interior and outer experience provides a useful illustration of the co-researchers’ experiences of time.

To recap, Husserl’s understanding of affectivity is founded on two aspects, *feeling affection* and *objectivating affection*. The first is a type of emotional background to everyday life; the second is a profound moment of affectivity that arises out of everyday experience. Both coalesce in the nexus of the trans-temporal experience of our daily lives. Husserl integrates these two realms of affectivity with two categories of time, a bounded moment of affectivity in time, and the ‘living event’ of affectivity as it occurs and is responded to in amongst the life-stream. These four aspects of Husserl’s definition of affectivity posit it as a continuum, as bounded and unbounded, intermeshed in the stream of daily consciousness and existing trans-temporally. Husserl’s depiction of time as outlined earlier is representative of the co-researchers’ altered time experiences, particularly the interrelational aspects of his time theory.

The proposition of affectivity as field-like affords a ‘resonance of being’ immersed in the ‘now’ consciousness of daily life, which means that it can be experienced as trans-temporal and therefore can exist outside day-to-day consciousness. Neville at LMU spoke of an expanded state of affectivity as he moved into deep meditation from his ‘superficial mind’ to a ‘whole state’ where he became aware of all of the fields merging. He said “that it all sort of comes together, I think our minds tend to pull things apart when we’re in our superficial mind, especially I notice when there is some angst or

anxiety, almost like different pieces are pulled apart and everything gets separated” (Interview, 2nd November, 2009).

Neville’s experience highlights a common theme in many of the co-researchers’ stories, in which they sensed movement through a differentiated plane into an integrated space that to varying degrees included or was influenced by affectivity. It was at this stage that some co-researchers started to *feel* an altered or expanded experience of emotion. Their descriptions of these *feelings* led to what appears to be their engagement with the *feeling nexus*, for they frequently described *feeling* a *contemplative synaesthesia*, or gestalt of the different modes of being. Often these experiences of the *feeling nexus* had a *feeling tone* that was weighted toward one of the modes. Hannah, for example, spoke of an *āsana*¹¹⁶ opening her heart, which seems to be an experience of the interspersion of the four modes but with affectivity defining the gestalt:

When I first started doing camel¹¹⁷ – when I came back to yoga after I’d had kids and everything, it used to make me cry because you’re opening your heart up so much. I just couldn’t do it without wanting to cry. And it’s taken me years to be able to do it without crying, and every time I do it now I go ‘Wow, I don’t feel like crying.’ It seems to me that *āsanas* and the yoga practice in general, is where you learn to physically open up your heart, and then what follows is a lot of emotions and stuff. (Interview, 22nd November, 2009)

Hannah’s encounter with this gestalt of the modes of being gave her access to an experience of her body as the “something more and something less of materiality” (Salamon 2006, p. 100). Her expanded sense of her body and emotions can be understood as a result of engaging the intertwining of the ‘phantasmatic’ and the material through proprioception (ibid.). This entwining process, which is similar to the *feeling nexus*, is outlined in Feuerstein’s (1989(b)) definition of Yoga as the ‘technology of ecstasy’. In this definition he links ecstasy and *samādhi* and translates the latter as a ‘placing or putting together’. What is put together, or interwoven, in this state of

¹¹⁶ In the *Yoga Sūtras* (Verse 46, Chapter II) Patanjali describes *āsana* as a ‘firm but relaxed seated position’.

¹¹⁷ *Uṣṭra-āsana*, or the camel pose, requires the practitioner to kneel, bend backwards then reach behind to grasp each heel (and if they are able, to drop their head backwards). This posture then opens the chest as it is pressed forward.

consciousness is the “individuated self with a universal matrix” (Whicher 1998(a), p. 212). Here Ian Whicher alludes to the Yogic belief that in the state of *samādhi* one experiences the reunion of the individual self (*jīva-ātman*) with the transcendental ground-of-being or supreme self (*parama-ātman*).¹¹⁸

Whicher (1998(a)) following Patañjali distinguishes two kinds of *samādhi*, the first is *samprajñāta-samādhi*, or *samādhi* with an ‘objective prop’ and the second, *asamprajñāta* the acognitive or supracognitive *samādhi*. Hannah entered the former, for she trained her attention (*dhāraṇā*) using the *āsanas* to focus on and in her body. In this state she was then able to *feel* the union of the proprioception of her physical heart space with aspects of her cognitive, transcendent and affective modes of being. From Hannah’s description it seems that continued experience of this expanded state of affectivity led over a period of time to the resolution of the sadness she felt. This form of learning or self-development provides a relevant example of the co-researchers’ experiences of expanded affectivity.

Hannah’s experience can be understood pedagogically through John Dirkx and Ruth Lavin’s (2003) *FourThought model of experience-based learning*. This involves: 1) trial and error; 2) rationality/reflection; 3) creative expression; and 4) discernment. The fourth way of knowing, ‘discernment’, is pertinent here as it can be understood as a form of contemplative learning that is primarily focused in the affective aspects of experience, and defined as an “interior phenomenon” (Dirkx & Lavin 2003, p. 6). In their development of this stage, Dirkx and Lavin emphasise the importance for educators, working or wanting to work with these types of holistic approaches, to facilitate students’ translation of the symbol languages that can arise from the interior. These approaches, unlike rationalist methods, “facilitate discernment, de-emphasize the role of rationality, and stress the significance of listening quietly and passively to a deeper source of knowledge within one’s self” (ibid.). This ‘knowing’ often speaks through expanded affectivity in enhanced somatic awareness, and the symbol and metaphor that can arise from this form of experience-based learning.

¹¹⁸ *Jīva-ātman* (living self) is the “individuated consciousness or psyche (*jīva*)” (Feuerstein 1990, p. 156), while the *parama-ātman* (supreme self) is the transcendental self. Liberation is said to result from the merging of the two (ibid.).

Dirkx and Lavin (2003) conclude that the pedagogical application of this aspect of experience-based learning needs to be premised on four tenets: firstly, the understanding of the interrelations of lived experience and learning; secondly, that discernment, and the other three ways of learning in their model manifest differently for they have their “own way of coming to know” (Dirk & Lavin 2003, p.7); thirdly, that students and teachers consciously and unconsciously experience these ways of learning/knowing; and lastly, that experience-based learning is complex and multidimensional. These four aspects and the pedagogical suggestions outlined in the following chapters provide a comprehensive starting point for those interested in including a contemplative orientation in their teaching.

The affective field

The complexity of experience-based learning is in part related to the multiplicity of students’ experiences and the variety of ways they apply what they have learnt. In the case of affective experience this can be seen in the numerous ways that affectivity is understood in educational theory.¹¹⁹ In this project, it emerges in the way that contemplation impacts affective knowing in education. An important aspect of the expanded affectivity that can result from contemplation was the co-researchers’ interrelational experience. This interrelationality is discussed in various ways through this project, though in this chapter it is directly related to affective experience. The expanded affectivity that developed after the co-researchers became more familiar with contemplative experience often led to deeper states of consciousness. They then began to *feel* their bodies becoming more porous and experienced themselves as a body-world continuum. This interpenetration of the inside and outside widens the edges of the ‘seeing body’¹²⁰ as it “subtends this visible body, and all the visibles with it. There is reciprocal insertion and intertwining of one in the other” (Merleau-Ponty 1968, p. 138).

¹¹⁹ See Colin Beard and his colleagues’ (2005) work on the place of affectivity and embodiment in higher education; Gilbert Caluya et al.’s (2011) critique of the place of affectivity in teaching international higher education students in Australia; John Dirkx’s (2008) examination of the meaning and role of emotions in adult learning; Mary Immordino-Yang and Antonio Damasio’s (2007) correlation of the affective and social neuroscience in education; Peter Lang and his colleagues’ (1998) discussion of pastoral care in affective education; and Arja Puurula et al.’s (2010) review of teacher and student attitudes to affective education.

¹²⁰ Merleau-Ponty’s ontology of the body contains the perceiving or ‘seeing body’ and the body that is seen, the ‘visible body’. These are not two separate bodies for they “emerge from the same [intercorporeal] being, linked to each other through a ‘thick reflection’, which is what allows me to see and be seen or to “touch myself touching” (Merleau-Ponty in Kaelin 1970, p. 111).

Contemplative experience of this interweaving of the interior and exterior, which can result from enhanced affectivity in contemplation, led some co-researchers to a sense of their bodies merging with their contexts. Jason spoke of an increased somatic-affective sensitivity, where a hyper-awareness of his body allowed its edges to spread out into the bodies of those who touched him:

Being in the *āsanas* it's such a sensitive thing for me, you know like when you are adjusted in *śavāsana*.¹²¹ When you're deeply relaxed after spending an hour or so getting into your body, doing these exercises, and then you finally lie down, it's just like you're really getting the residue of all of that stuff. And then someone comes around and lovingly rubs your temples or pulls your neck straight, it's like wow, it feels amazing – because there has been so much of an opening. There's some transference I think? There is some kind of thing that's happening, be it at a physical or a non-physical level, and if you believe in that idea of energetic bodies, and all of that kind of thing, there's some sort of energetic transference, and you can almost read what's happening in that other person if you get sensitised enough. (Interview, 11th October, 2009)

This refinement of focus through contemplation often led, as it did for Jason, to the apprehension of affectivity as an 'affective field' in which feelings were transferred between individuals and their contexts. As such, it encompasses both the understanding of affectivity as physiological arousal leading to expressive behaviours, and the more expanded experience of it as a 'sensitivity'. Both are predicated on the functioning of the central nervous system in response to outer and inner stimulus, which is then expressed in autogenic action. Nonetheless the latter is more readily felt as "contact with the plenum of external events" (Langer in Heron 1992, p.16). In Heron's development of 'feelings' as an extended form of affectivity, he correlates his definition with Langer's to depict emotion as a 'field of feeling', in which the "capacity of the psyche...participate[s] in wider unities of being, to become at one with the differential content of a whole field of experience...and to know its own distinctness while unified with the differentiated other" (Heron 1992, p. 16). Engaging this field of affectivity can

¹²¹ In *śavāsana*, or corpse pose, the practitioner lies on their back with their arms and legs resting slightly apart. The purpose of the pose is to induce relaxation, and for this reason is often practised at the end of a yoga practice.

result in the practitioner *feeling* the interrelationality of themselves as an “open system...within the wider field of forces, intensities and duration that give rise to it” (Clough 2010, p. 216).

Affectivity, contemplative experience and education

Patricia Clough’s (2010) understanding of the individual as a porous system interweaving and interwoven by its contexts forms a part of her analysis of the ‘turn to affect’, which refocused attention on the somatic in education. Her development of the individual consisting of fields of being, including a field of affectivity, indicates, but has a different focus to, educational psychology’s conception of the affective field. The latter is grounded in a psychosocial model that includes the influences of the affective domain.

Clough’s definition of the interrelational individual and the co-researchers’ expanded interrelational experience of themselves introduces one of two central approaches to the affective field in education. It is an important aspect for contemplative pedagogues working with emotion in education to consider, as it frames the potential for the co-creation of knowledge in the pedagogical exchange. Matthew Schertz (2008) contends that this is more than the imagining of being inside another, rather it is the participation in “an anonymous, affective field” (p. 190) that can result from the “phenomenon of coupling” (Merleau-Ponty in Schertz 2008, p. 190). In his examination of the affective turn, Schertz defines individuals as intersubjective beings comprising:

‘pre-verbal, existential’ discrete components as well as ‘domains of social experience and social relatedness’...[in which]...[t]he other’s behaviour, attitudes and expressions are not transferred as separate bits of cognitive and affective information, but as qualitative experience. (2008, p. 190)

The intersubjective and sociocultural dimensions of the affective field in education link unconscious or internal learning, which is another relevant approach, in this discussion of the affective in education. This is outlined in educational psychologist Edgar Stones’s (2012) critique of the place of affectivity in a common hierarchical taxonomy of learning. This schema involves the acquisition of increasingly more complex and

abstract knowledge, though Stones asserts that something is missing in this categorisation of learning. In his analysis of the research underpinning this prevalent educational schema, he claims that “the hierarchical structure was most difficult to find in the affective part of the taxonomy. The principles of simple to complex and concrete to abstract were not sufficient for developing the affective domain” (Stones 2012, p. 197). Stones believes that something else is required, something that resides outside ascending levels of cognitive aptitude, and this, he suggests, is the process of internalisation.

A further development of subjective experience in learning can be found in the work of educational psychologist Lev Vygotsky, who advances Piaget’s theory of the ‘unconscious’ assimilation of knowledge in the intellectual and affective fields. This is seen in the first stage of Vygotsky’s three-phase schema of concept development, which involves a subjective (unconscious) stage in which ‘unorganised congeries’ or ‘heaps’ (Vygotsky in Schroeder, p. 73) are combined to complete syncretic forms of the final unified concepts. If engaged pedagogically, this affective subjective realm, including its interrelationality, can support the development of a ‘relational pedagogy’, which emphasises the correspondence between the affective and intersubjective in learning and teaching (Murphy & Brown 2012). The importance of affective experience in education is stressed here, for despite the emphasis on the cognitive in many mainstream approaches to education, “learning is embedded in the emotional life of the learner” (Murphy & Brown 2012, p. 645).

The permeable affective mode of being

An elemental foundation of the interrelational and subjective aspects of affectivity in education is described in the following section, which examines a permeable facet of the affective mode of being. It is outlined in phenomenologist Elizabeth Behnke’s development of a phenomenological intersubjective affectivity which she terms ‘interkinaesthetic-affectivity’.¹²² This permeable affectivity is ‘sensuously palpable’, immersive, flow-like and pre-existent. She emphasises the latter with her suggestion

¹²² The experience of this affectivity is understood as a ‘kinaesthetic consciousness’, “a sentient/sensitive motility whose capabilities are not limited to voluntary movement on the part of the active, awake I, but include the broader domain of primal motility of which egocially directed movement is merely an abstract moment” (Behnke 2008(a), p.146).

that affectivity is “already permeated with affective tone...and already involving the experiencer’s kinaesthetic capability for receptivity and response” (Behnke 2008(a), p. 146). Like the permeable form of the somatic, its interrelationality allows the *feeling nexus* to interweave it with the other modes of being. Behnke developed this affectivity in an engagement with Edmund Husserl’s investigation of affectivity and kinaesthetic experience. It is described here as permeable because of Behnke’s understanding of the ‘interkinaesthetic’ as a “specifically kinaesthetic mode of interbodily relationality” (Behnke 2008(a), p. 144). This interrelationality or intersubjectivity is one of three aspects of Behnke’s thesis that support the premise of a permeable mode of affectivity. The second is her suggestion that a reflective contemplative mode is required to perceive it and the last that it is grounded in an ecological substrate, which is similar to the elemental interrelational ground that the *feeling nexus* resides in.

To understand interkinesthetic affectivity and the way it is described here as permeable, we need to return to Husserl’s concept of the kinaesthetic.¹²³ In Husserl’s work on affectivity, the kinaesthetic relies on something that remains once bodily sensation is stripped from it. It is an inherent presence described by Husserl as the “original form of I do” (Cairn 1976, p. 73). This foundational aspect of the ego or ‘I do’, which supports the kinaesthetic, is described by Behnke after Husserl as a ‘sheer motility’, a potentiality that can be enacted or not at any stage. When this enactment occurs it is a fusion of *kinēsis* (motility) and *aesthēsis* (sensing oneself) that results in the common experience of the kinaesthetic, which has three parts. They are the felt sense of motility and the sensing of one’s self, which forms what Behnke terms kinaesthetic ‘objects’, plus the blocking or receiving of these ‘objects’. Each of these aspects of the kinaesthetic is founded on what Behnke terms an ‘emerging kinaesthetic liquidity’, which can be experienced in a state that is “merely being-there with it” (Behnke 2008(a), p. 149).

¹²³ Behnke delineates five points in her critique of Husserl’s protean conception of affectivity. They are listed here to support the advancement of interkinesthetic affectivity as permeable affectivity. Firstly, the context of each specific form needs to be considered. Secondly, his affectivity is a ‘hinge-concept’, often joining two ordinarily opposed concepts, such as subject-object. Thirdly, it is always an aspect of a more complex whole, in this case the elemental interkinaesthetic field. Fourthly, it contains both sheer sensuous affection(s) and ‘core hyletic objects’, and affective tones or moods, which are not separate but pervade each other. Lastly, there is a ‘double’ sense of affectivity, centred on its animating aspect, which stimulates firstly, consciousness, and secondly, a willingness (or not) to engage it. This interkinesthetic affectivity is ‘sensuously palpable’, immersive, flow-like, and pre-existent (Behnke 2008(a), p. 146).

The moment-to-moment awareness Behnke describes is important because it is similar to the contemplative practice of mindfulness. This reflective awareness is outlined by Daniel Siegel through Jon Kabat-Zinn's¹²⁴ definition of mindfulness as "the essential aspect of meta-awareness and attention to intention that makes...[it]...a powerful dimension of being in the present moment" (Siegel 2007, p. 243). Mindfulness is similar to a phenomenological reflective state developed by Behnke, which requires the experiencer to stay in the kinaesthetic moments as they unfold "not by taking these feelings as 'objects' over-against me, but by appreciating the ongoing kinaesthetics of *undergoing* them, lucidly living them from within as a participant rather than contemplating like a spectator" (Behnke 2008(a), p. 149).

These reflective instances require the individual to 'undergo' or be immersed in a 'style' of experiencing that can reveal a subtle realm of affectivity, where the "phenomena themselves' come to evidential self-giveness" (Behnke 2008(a), p. 144). Interkinesthetic affectivity is essentially a co-constituted phenomenon that requires the individual to be *affected* by it:

the relation between the experiencer and the affectively-drenched content is not the frontal relation of a perceiving consciousness to a visible object...Instead I find myself suffused with the felt texture of my own kinaesthetically-accomplished undergoing". (Behnke 2008(b), p. 50)

The pre-predicative and reflective aspect of experiencing interkinesthetic affectivity can happen both 'interbodily' and through a co-constituting process with an incorporeal, interkinaesthetic field. Behnke alludes to this 'field' in her description of the process of perceiving interkinesthetic affectivity as an "integrative, transcendent apperception that automatically takes any currently experienced sensuous moment as an adumbration 'of' such an identical unity" (ibid.). This identical 'unity', which founds other affectivities, is the interkinaesthetic field, an elemental substrate similar to the one that the *feeling nexus* resides in. The emergence of interkinesthetic affectivity in this field often goes

¹²⁴ Jon Kabat-Zinn is the founding director of the pain and stress reduction clinic at the *Centre for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society* at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, Boston, USA. It can be suggested that his seminal work in 'mindfulness' underpins the mindfulness movement in the West, and his often quoted definition of mindfulness meditation is "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally" (Kabat-Zinn 1994, p. 4).

unnoticed. It is typically absent in everyday life as these “‘pre-giving’ performances...usually function anonymously while we are thematically engaged with what is ‘pre-given’ for our currently ‘active operations’” (Behnke 2008(a), p. 150). To counter this Behnke proposes the ‘moment-to-moment’ or mindful awareness described earlier.

These three aspects of Behnke’s interkinaesthetic affectivity are important in this development of a permeable form of affectivity, starting with the interrelational nature of permeable affectivity, because it provides a way that this form of affectivity can be interwoven by the *feeling nexus* with the other permeable modes of being. Behnke’s proposition that interkinaesthetic affectivity is realised in a reflective, meditative state of consciousness further supports this study’s focus on the role that contemplation plays in accessing the *feeling nexus*. Lastly, the conception of interkinaesthetic affectivity as a field not only describes permeable affectivity but also illustrates the elemental ground that the *feeling nexus* resides in.

Affectivity, Yoga, phenomenology and the *feeling nexus*

Yoga and phenomenology provide further theoretical support for this development of an affective field. Specifically, Yoga’s understanding of affectivity is similar to Heron’s ‘field of experience’, and is reinforced by the Yogic model of the mind as an incorporeal body or sheath (*kośa*). This is the *manomaya kośa*, (sheath composed of mind), which can be visualised as a ‘field of mind’ constituted by the interweaving of its four aspects: *manas*, the instinctive mind (somatic); *ahaṃkāra*, the sense of I-ness, (cognitive and affective); *citta*, (memory); and *buddhi*, higher mind. In Yoga the mind is interwoven through the body and the spirit, and in this way the individual is understood to be a:

spiritual entity interacting in the material world, using a body/mind as a vehicle. The body/mind is equipped with: An energy supply (*prāṇa*); A sensory/perceptual system to detect activities in the physical world (*jñānendriyāṇi*); A sense of ‘I’-ness (*ahaṃkāra*); Memory (*citta*); A cognitive (thinking, planning) mechanism to assess input and to decide on behaviour (*manas, buddhi and higher*); An affective (emotions and feelings – motivational)

mechanism to activate behaviour (*manas and higher*); Organs of action to approach or avoid the outside objects and otherwise act in the world (*karmendriyas*). (Rishi Vivekananda 2005, p. 23)

In this schema all the aspects of mind-body, including affectivity, interweave each other. They also wind through the other *kośas*,¹²⁵ the food body (*annamayakośa*), breath body (*prāṇamayakośa*), consciousness body, (*vijñānamayakośa*) and the bliss body or (*ānandamayakośa*), so linking all the ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ aspects of the individual’s modes of being.

The interrelational processes of the *kośas* frame the Yogic conception of the permeable self, which includes permeable affectivity. This is supported by the *guṇas* relationship with the *manomaya kośa*, which provides for the influence of affectivity. The *guṇas* are thought to be able to affect the mental body because of the familial links between the *guṇas* and all that they create and influence. For example, although *buddhi*, one aspect of the *manomaya kośa*, is the “deepest aspect of the human psyche...the birthplace of true wisdom” (Feuerstein 1990, p. 23), it can be obscured by emotions (*bhāva, bhava*).¹²⁶ This is because mind and emotion are ultimately products of the turbulent interactions of the *guṇas*. In his examination of the blurring of the *buddhi* by affectivity, Richard Robinson (1972) suggests that “[i]t is not quite clear in the *Gītā* just how emotive states are related to *buddhi*, but desire and anger are said to ‘cover’ or ‘veil’ it. It is also said that they ‘cover’ the *manas* and the *indriyāṇi*, which may mean that the emotions affect the entire psyche and not just one level of it” (p. 303). The relations between affectivity and the *guṇas* reveal the manner in which the processes¹²⁷ of the *guṇas* can generate an experience of an expanded affectivity, as they produce

¹²⁵ The concept of the *kośas* is linked in Yoga to the ‘map of the individual’ (Robinson 1972). This map ranks aspects of the individual starting with their material features and then moves progressively into more subtle realms. In his *Some Buddhist and Hindu concepts of intellect-will* Richard Robinson supplies what he describes as an early instance of this map from the *Katha Upaniṣad* (KU) I.3.10-11, which states that, “Beyond the sense-powers (*indriya*) are the subtle objects (*artha*), and beyond the subtle objects (*artha*) is the *manas* (thought-organ), and beyond the *manas* is the *buddhi* (intellect, consciousness), beyond the *buddhi* is the *mahān ātmā* (great soul), beyond the *mahān ātmā* is the *avyakta* (unmanifest), and beyond the unmanifest is the *puruṣa* (spirit). Beyond the spirit there is nothing” (1972, p. 300).

¹²⁶ Translation of *Bhāva, bhava* from:
<http://spokensanskrit.de/index.php?input=bhaava&direction=SE&script=HK&link=yes>

¹²⁷ Barnhart’s (1997) presentation of Jitendra Nath Mohanty’s proposition about the *guṇas* expands this concept of the process of the *guṇas*. He asserts that “[t]he three *guṇas* are not only thus interdependent, they are capable of forming a complex unity – which is the unity of *prakṛti*, of the experience of its content” (Mohanty in Barnhart 1997, p. 423).

both the “object of conscious experience as well as our emotional reaction to it” (Barnhart 1997, p. 423).

Yoga’s proposition of the extension or bilocation of emotion reflects something similar in Sue Cataldi’s project where she posits the depth or place of emotion as being “somewhere in-between” (1993, p. 90). It is neither distinctly mental nor physical, for it “belong[s] to’ the ‘expressive space’ of flesh” (ibid.). It becomes more like a *field of feeling* that “bridges the gap between inner and outer” (Hillman 1999, p. 90). This form of affective experience can, I suggest, lead to the apprehension of the *feeling nexus*, or participation in what Heron (1992) describes as the ‘wider unities of being’. Contemplation is able to mediate this process as it draws the attention deeply into the body, frequently the site of affect, and therefore into the mass of interlinking systems that it generates and is generated by. An example of this type of contemplative immersive somatic/affective experience was described by co-researchers as emotion penetrating their bodies. Jason spoke of it being stored ‘in’ his body:

Yeh, the emotions are in the body I believe, they’re stored, I don’t know, stored? Or there’s patterns in there, or layers, or superimpositions, and you know I mentioned it briefly in class today, I think it was the third class, about getting into the shadows of your body – I mean, as opposed to like a gymnastics thing. In that class I was trying to get them to explore those areas that they might have overlooked, cause yeh maybe you can bend L3 in the back this way, but can you get into L4 a little bit lower, while you’re still working in L3? Just that idea, that amount of subtlety, that’s what I like from the Iyengar system, you know, that you can press the inner part of your hand down, but can you press the inner part of your hand down and then take the outer edge of your index finger and roll it down as well, and you just keep refining it, and refining it. (Interview, 11th October, 2009)

When Jason and other co-researchers became more familiar with their experience of an expanded affectivity, such as their sense of emotion being transmuted through their bodies or it becoming a part of other modes of being, they changed. This *contemplative synaesthesia* led the transformation of pre-figurative experience into cognitive awareness, which then grounded the new meaning they were making. The co-

researchers' somatic sensing of expanded affectivity, which can be understood as an experience of the outcomes of the *feeling nexus* process, drew many to the incorporeal space of a field of affectivity and *feeling*. This is a space between themselves in their usual, possibly unconscious experience of emotion and a provisional self that is being actuated in the perception of, and immersion in, the interrelational field that the *feeling nexus* resides in. It appeared that the opportunity to 'stand' in the gap between the old and the new provisional self provided a vantage point that was important in the process of change. As Hannah said when speaking about the results of her practice, "It gives me more of a balanced sense, more of an ability to have a bit of space between myself and emotions, and all of those kinds of things that allow me to feel safer in the world" (Interview, 22nd November, 2009).

Stage three in summary

The understanding of an expanded permeable affectivity detailed in this section speaks of an ecological state. When experienced in contemplation it resulted in some of the co-researchers sensing their bodies as porous and containing gestalts of the modes of being. This conception of affectivity is predicated on the ecological body described in Chapter Two, Csikszentmihályi's self-system and Behnke's interkinaesthetic affectivity. It is supported by Yoga's schemas of the *gunas* and *kośas* and the *flesh* ontology in phenomenology. The enfolding processes of *flesh* suggest a *field of feeling* which, like the Yogic models, support the co-researchers' reports of an expansive and interrelational experience of the affective which is said here to be produced by the *feeling nexus* process. Immersion in this affective state, which occurred in individual and collective practices, is explored in this section's pedagogical examination of expanded affectivity.

Stage four: An altered sense of space and time

Another common feature of flow experiences is a 'distorted' sense of time. When consciousness is fully active and ordered, hours seem to pass by in minutes...The clock no longer serves as a good analog of the temporal quality of experience. (Csikszentmihályi 1992, p. 33)

The fourth stage of co-researchers' *contemplative trajectory*, following their return to their bodies, the *learning of feelings* or internal senses and their engagement with an expanded affectivity, was their encounter with an altered sense of time and space, which they often described as being in the 'now' or the 'flow'. It appeared that as focus in the practices intensified, it led some co-researchers to these experiences of a space in which time was altered. Persson (2007) discovered something similar in her exposition of the phenomenology of place in the Australian Satyananda Yoga community. Many of the Satyananda yogin's (yoga practitioners) found that their yoga practice generated contemplative states that possessed a "distinctly spatial quality" (Persson 2007, p. 45). This was similar for Heather, a co-researcher in this project, who spoke of contemplative encounters with 'another space', which occurred both when she painted and meditated:

there's another space that's very meditative where thought stops and time stands still...you know that thing when you really go into your painting and you kind of go 'vroom' – time and everything stands still, not stands still, but you lose contact with it. That's probably why I can meditate because I already know what that feels like, there's this place in my brain and if I can find that spot, I know I've been there before. (Interview, 24th October, 2009)

Heather used a previous feeling of this space, in which time changed, to direct her back to 'that' place in her brain. Her's and other co-researchers' altered perceptions of space and time are examined in this section using phenomenology and Yoga, starting with Merleau-Ponty's development of time as an 'ongoing becoming', which is defined through his theories of perception, *flesh* and the *chiasm*. This reveals the interspersion of perception, perceiver and perceived, which requires a 'slippage' in perception, in this case the altered perception of time/space that can arise in contemplation.

Merleau-Ponty's theory of time is integrated with the co-researchers' perception of time and space being transformed through contemplation. These findings are then examined using Mihály Csikszentmihályi's *flow* theory, and related to Yogic understandings of *flow* and time. Here the similarities between *samādhi* (ecstasy or enstasy) and *flow* are outlined through co-researchers' experiences of *flow-like* states. This section then reflects on the interrelationality co-researchers engaged in these deep states, which is

thought here to be produced by the *feeling nexus*. Interspersed through this exploration of the co-researchers' distorted sense of time and space are suggestions for pedagogy which acknowledges and includes contemplative education students' altered states of consciousness.

Flesh, perception, the chiasm and time

The nonlinear way the co-researchers experienced space and time is contrary to what phenomenologist Glen Mazis (1992) describes as 'Cartesian space', which employs a grid of positions within a neutral containment. It also differs from time that is constituted by specific clock units, each like "an arrow, as a constant stream based on sequences of finite or infinitesimal elements" (Varela 1999(c), p. 112). Merleau-Ponty's conception of time is more descriptive of what the co-researchers experienced, for him it is an "ongoing becoming and not merely the containing structure of becoming" (Mazis 1992, p. 53). The immersive sense or *flow* suggested in this definition is closer to what the co-researchers reported.

Time for Merleau-Ponty is directly linked to his theories of perception, *flesh* and the *chiasm*. It is grounded in the reversibility of perception and time, as perception is not outside time but enmeshed in it. An understanding of reversibility starts with his ontology of *flesh*, which is the continuous procreative force of enfolding, in which perception is 'worked out' in perceptibility (Mazi 1992). In this reading, *flesh* exists at the flux and flow of perception as it is drawn from and through a body that is continually participating in the enfolding. Because this body cannot be contained in one moment of time, it is understood to be formed in a constant engagement with retrograde and progressive movements backward and forward in time. This reversibility is a part of Merleau-Ponty's conception of the continuous genesis of the world through *flesh*. Its coming into being is the *chiasmic* folding back of perception on itself, in which the body is "working through...its engagement with what is perceived within an enveloping world" (Mazis 1992, p. 58). In this way reversibility is an 'achievement within time' that links the perceived with the perceiver in the perception. Mazis (1992) describes instants of reversibility, as moments of displacement that become a part of the 'thickness' of temporality, which is non-sequential time.

The dichotomy of past-present, which may appear inherent in reversibility, is resolved by Merleau-Ponty's proposition that they each unfold in the other, "the past and present are *Ineinander*, each enveloping-enveloped – and that itself is the flesh" (Merleau-Ponty in Mazis 1992, p. 59). Time as *flesh* folds back on itself in two ways, in a sudden enfolding and in larger temporal rhythms of becoming. It is the former, the shorter bursts or 'chiasmatic leaps' that Merleau-Ponty calls the 'Memory of the World', which is the re-remembering or re-bodying of the body. The past can also be present in a third way outside the world of intentionality or action, in the 'rupturing of the world' in tufts (*en touffe*)¹²⁸ (Merleau-Ponty 1968). In each of these ways we can be opened to the depths of time, where the reversibility of *flesh* provides an immersive interrelational experience, as it draws perceiver, perceived and perceiving together.

There needs to be some slippage in perception for the individual to sense this enmeshment. In the case of the co-researchers, this was their altered perception of time and space, which is similar to the sense of interrelationality and flow inherent in reversibility. Morris, a student in Katherine Harper's *Arts of Asia* course at LMU, describes this *flow-like* time, which he experienced in contemplation, as feeling "just easy going in the moment, just allowing everything to be the way it is, free flowing, going with the flow, whatever you want to call it" (Interview, 15th November, 2009). While Sharon, a student in *Arts of Asia*, spoke of staying in the 'now', "I think with meditation it's just for me, at least it's, you know, staying in the now?...just being present to yourself in this moment" (Interview, 16th November, 2009). While these students don't explicitly state that they experienced a merging of space and time, both Morris's experience of 'being in the moment' and Sharon's being 'present to herself' can be understood as a 'space' that is 'time'.

¹²⁸ Mazi (1992) develops this concept from Merleau-Ponty's (1968) introductory paragraph to the section about the *chiasm* in *The visible and invisible*. Here Merleau-Ponty suggests that sensing, speaking, even thinking, remain a mystery, for while they may have a name in all languages, these names only "convey signification in tufts, thickets of proper meanings and figurative meanings" (Merleau-Ponty in Mazis 1992, p. 68).

Csikszentmihályi's *flow*

Descriptions of these states of space-time also appear in reports from participants in the *flow*¹²⁹ experiments of Hungarian psychologist Mihály Csikszentmihályi. In his research with artists, surgeons and sports people, Csikszentmihályi (1975) found that many of them reached an optimal state in which they lost a sense of time. His participants described feeling a “unified flowing from one moment to the next, in which we feel in control of our actions, and in which there is little distinction between self and environment, between stimulus and response, or between past, present and future” (Csikszentmihályi 1975, p. 43). In this state the practitioner loses an awareness of themselves as being separate from the actions they are performing (Csikszentmihályi 1990/2009), and instead, attention, motivation, psychosomatics and context become enmeshed.

The *flow* experience is similar to American psychologist Abraham Maslow's ‘peak’ experience, the climatic point of the last phase of self-actualisation, which is the last level of his *Hierarchy of Needs*.¹³⁰ There are similar versions of *flow* or *peak* experience in theories of transpersonalism which relate to ritual and liminal experience (Aziz 2007; Scotton et al. 1996; Young & Goulet 1994). The regularity of the altered sense of space and time in co-researchers' stories, Csikszentmihályi's *flow* theory, Maslow's *Hierarchy of Needs*, contemplative education and transpersonalism suggests that it is a common quale of deep focus and contemplation. In their *Transpersonal knowing: Exploring the horizon of consciousness*, Hart and his colleagues (2000) speak of this ‘timeless’ space as an experience of breaking through the “self-identification of the biological and biographical history, linear time and bounded space” (p. 295). Similarly, the psychologist Joseph Vrinte in his exploration of transpersonal psychotherapy found an ‘extended identity’, which he suggests “goes beyond the usual limits of the ego, beyond space and time” (2002, p. 62) (See also Ferrer 2002; Pear 2007; Scotton et al. 1996; Valle 1998). Although there are variations in these theories and while the experience of *flow* is different for each person, there are a number of shared aspects. The two most relevant in this chapter are a loss of a sense of ‘self’

¹²⁹ Csikszentmihályi et al. (2005) define flow as “a subjective state that people report when they are completely involved in something to the point of forgetting time, fatigue, and everything else but the activity itself” (p. 600)

¹³⁰ The *Hierarchy of Needs* is visualised as a pyramid, starting with physiological needs at the base, moving to safety, love/belonging, esteem, and finally self-actualisation at the top.

described by Csikszentmihályi's participants, and the loss of a sense of time that the co-researchers in this study reported.

Yoga, *samādhi* and time

The Yogic concept of *samādhi*¹³¹ provides a way to understand the relations between contemplative practice and the co-researchers' experiences of an altered sense of space and time. The state of *samādhi*, which can be achieved through regular contemplative practice, reveals the constructed nature of time and enables the loss of ego-consciousness. Its ability to do this is explained through its etymology. *Samādhi* is derived from the verb root *dhā* (to place or hold), which is joined with the "verbal prefix *sam* (together)...to form the stem *samādhā*, which literally means 'putting together'" (Whicher 1998(a), p. 182). This indicates the reunion¹³² of the empirical self (*ātman*) with the ultimate Self or *puruṣa*, which can be experienced as a *flow-like* merging of the individual with their contexts. When the adherent apprehends this in contemplation, they can gain an awareness of the potential for the final dissolution of their *ātman* in *puruṣa*. In a number of cases the co-researchers reported a sense of detaching from their ego- or 'I-consciousness' (*ahaṃkāra*). While this indicates their immersion in a *samādhi*-like state it was not *asamprajñāta-samādhi*, which transcends all thoughts (*vyrttis*) and mental content, but *samādhi* connected with objects of cognition or *samprajñāta-samādhi*.

The links between *samādhi* and altered experiences of time are outlined in Yoga's two central understandings of time – ultimate (*samādhic*) and 'nonultimate' (clock) time. The latter is considered an invention of the mind, a product of its predilection to constantly construct duration out of passing sensations (Klostermaier 1984, p. 206). As the yogin moves through the different stages of meditation and levels of *samādhic* experience, they are thought to be moving towards ultimate time. When they reach

¹³¹ Georg Feuerstein (1990) details what he terms classical Yoga's complete model of *samādhi*: "(1) Supraconscious ecstasy (*asamprajñāta-samādhi*); (2) Conscious ecstasy (*samprajñāta-samādhi*) with its subforms suprarreflexive clarity (*nirvicāra-vaiśāradya*), suprarreflexive ecstasy (*nirvicāra-samāpatti*), reflexive ecstasy (*savicāra-samāpatti*), supracogitative ecstasy (*nirvitarka-samāpatti*), cogitative ecstasy (*savitarka-samāpatti*)" (p. 303).

¹³² Eliade's definition of *samādhi* also posits it as a process of union or conjunction. He states that, "the final result and the crown of all the yogins efforts and exercises is *samādhi*, a term which can be translated as 'union, totality, absorption in, conjunction, en-stasis'. *Samādhi* is a modality of being peculiar to yoga. This paradoxical state makes possible the self-revelation of the Self, and makes final liberation a reality" (1963, p.135).

dharma-megha-samādhi (the highest level of *samādhi*) and perceive time as a creation of the mind, they are then able to step outside the play of the *guṇas* into ‘zero-time’ (Klostermaier 1984, p. 209).

To achieve *dharma-megha-samādhi* the yogin applies *saṃyama* (a constraint) or the continuous practice of concentration on the present moment or ‘point in time’ (Feuerstein 1990, p. 310). In this way they are able to perceive that which is *vastu* (a real thing) in time. Klaus Klostermaier describes this process as the mutual corroboration of the reality of consciousness and its object for which it is responsible (1984, p. 207). Following this realisation and the full immersion in *dharma-megha-samādhi*, *kaivalya* (aloneness) can arise. In the state of *kaivalya* the adherent can witness the dissolution of the *guṇas* as they realise their *dharmic* nature. Veda Vyasa describes the involution of the *guṇas* as them “having served their function...After they have exhausted their *karman* and exhausted their sequence they can no longer sustain even a *kṣaṇa*”¹³³ (Vyāsa in Klostermaier 1984, p. 207). The yogin’s realisation of the *dharmic*-character of the most elemental form, the *kṣaṇa*, provides an essential breakthrough in the quest for *kaivalya*.

The realisation of *kaivalya* marks the end of the stages of *samādhi*, so completing the Yogic conception of expanded time. These stages begin with the time created by the mind’s tendency to construct duration out of passing sensation, followed by the apprehension of the fluidity of time, which is glimpsed in the intermediary stages of *samādhi*, and lastly the zero-time experienced in *dharma-megha-samādhi* and *kaivalya*.

While *samādhi* is the eighth and final limb¹³⁴ in Sage Patanjali’s *Yoga Sūtras*, which may suggest that it is rarely attained, it was not uncommon for the co-researchers to experience what appeared to be fragments of *samādhi*. Sharon, a student in Katherine Harper’s *Arts of Asia*¹³⁵ course, spoke of a *samādhic* or *flow-like* state in her meditation practice:

¹³³ *Kṣaṇa*, indivisible, smallest moment of time.

¹³⁴ The eight limbs or steps prescribed in the *Yoga Sūtras* are: *yama*, the five abstentions, *niyama*, the five observances, *āsanas*, the yoga postures, *prāṇāyāma*, breath control, *pratyāhāra*, sense withdrawal, *dhāraṇā*, concentration, *dhyāna*, steadfast meditation and *samādhi*, oneness with the object of meditation.

Well I think with meditation it's just, for me at least, it's you know 'staying in the now' and concentrating on what's going on with you at this present moment. You know our minds are so powerful that you can conjure up this whole picture of what we think it's going to be like and we have no idea. So I think uhm just 'being present to yourself' in this moment...it's difficult and it's really hard to keep myself centered...but you know, I think you finally come to a point where you don't even know that you are practising it any more, you just kind of get into that zone which is nice. (Interview, 16th November, 2009)

The slippage in Sharon's perception of time and space through contemplation led to a *flow* or *samādhi-like* experience that supported the new meanings she made from her contemplative practice.

Intrinsic motivation, flow, and learning

The intrinsic pleasure that can result from deep focus is an important aspect that links the co-researchers' experience of an altered sense of space and time and contemplative education. This can be seen in what Agnes, a yoga teacher and student at LMU, described as the result of her contemplative practice. She said that its deep focus led to her, "whole vision just opening up" as the yoga cleared "emotional knots and stuck energy" (Interview, 9th October, 2009). In his work on education Csikszentmihályi (1992) describes this 'opening' as psychic negentropy, optimal experience, or *flow*, which is obtained "when all the contents of consciousness are in harmony with each other...These are the subjective conditions we call pleasure, happiness, satisfaction, enjoyment" (p. 24). It is an important aspect of contemplation to consider in the development of contemplative pedagogy. For despite the focus on the development of cognitive skills in educational theory, pleasure is fundamental to learning. As Csikszentmihályi states, "[t]here is certainly much that can be done to improve the educational process by increasing the enjoyment it potentially contains, but is so rarely part of the school experience" (1992, p, 12).

¹³⁵ Dr Harper's *Arts in Asia* (ARHS 321) course contains a meditation component in which students' meditative experiences provide an introduction to the contemplative states that Zen artists painted from. In the LMU handbook her course is described as "A survey of Buddhist arts with particular focus on the Zen sect and its concomitant arts (architecture, gardens, painting, tea ceremony, ceramics, flower arranging, and the martial arts)" (<http://bulletin.lmu.edu/arhs-321.htm>).

Intrinsic motivation or enjoyment, which is a significant factor of *flow*, arises from the deep focus that leads to *flow*. It occurs when the individual becomes so involved in their activity that they continue doing it simply for its own sake. Intrinsic enjoyment is described by Udo Konradt and Karin Sulz (2001) as the last of the nine dimensions of *flow*, starting with clear goals, immediate feedback, personal skills well matched to given challenges, the merger of action and awareness, concentration on the task at hand, a sense of potential control, a loss of self-consciousness, an altered sense of time and finally, the experience becoming autotelic.

The intrinsic enjoyment that can accompany *flow* is a “powerful motivating force because it rewards the activity performed” (Schüler 2011, p. 1304). Catherine, a yoga teacher in Los Angeles, spoke of the way that the pleasure in her yoga practice supported the positive changes in her life, “Things were happening that I didn’t understand but I could see they were beneficial and so that was one thing, and the other was that I’d had a kind of very unhealthy lifestyle before I started doing yoga, but that changed” (Interview, 12th October, 2009). Similarly, Alicia a student in the Yoga Psychology course at Ramapo College, was surprised to find that she enjoyed the *flow* state she entered through the course’s mantra practices:

It’s just that it kind of cleared my head; it was just this one thing that I was focused on. At first I was focused on trying not to sound like an idiot, I was trying to say these words correctly. But then afterwards it kind of came naturally and it definitely cleared my head up, and I was like, ‘Oh no wonder people do this – it works’...afterwards I did all of my homework, and I wrote the reflection for that class right away. (Interview, 14th November, 2009)

The benefits that many of the co-researchers gained from their contemplative *flow* experiences encouraged them to continue practising. This phenomenon is discussed by the educational theorist Julia Schüler (2011), who claims that activities which “have been rewarded are more likely to be performed again” (p. 1304). She believes this creates a performance-reward cycle in which enhanced performance produces gains, which then encourages enhanced performance and so on. In addition to this outcome of *flow*, it is important to consider the characteristics of *flow* related to performance when

designing contemplative pedagogy. These include “strong concentration on the task, a sense of control, and the absence of anxiety” (Schüler 2011, p. 1305).

These benefits of *flow* can be encouraged if the conditions it requires are incorporated in the learning environment. This starts by correctly navigating the balance between the challenge of the task and the student’s skills, if the task is not challenging enough the student will become bored, if too difficult it may cause anxiety. Unambiguous feedback and the setting of clear goals are also important (Schüler 2011). Once these conditions are met, a range of tasks may be introduced to encourage *flow*, though the most obvious in contemplative education are forms of contemplative practice which, it could be argued, have been designed to facilitate *flow*.

Altered perception and interrelational experience

Understanding contemplative phenomena, such as the altered sense of space and time experience, helps answer this project’s central research question, which asks how contemplative experience actuates learning. The co-researchers’ apperception of a progenitive ground of intertwining, which can result from altered perception in contemplation, is significant for this question. This is because of the similarity of its form to that of the *feeling nexus*.¹³⁶ It appears that contemplative immersion in the integrating force of this interrelationality realigned the co-researchers with the fundamental intertwining ground of themselves. This then led, I believe, to the changes they reported, such as a sense of balance, more focus, equanimity and enhanced empathy.

Quite how this realignment delivers these changes is uncertain. For engagement with the *feeling nexus* happens in an *invisible*, inner realm, and the translation of the pre-predicative *feeling* of it through pre-figurative, somatic and cognitive stages is not always clear. However, this project aims to answer that question with its proposition of the *feeling nexus*. Propositions for its form and processes are outlined throughout this study using phenomenology and Yoga, and augmented here with results from

¹³⁶ The reintegration of self, which is described earlier in this chapter with Yoga philosophy, suggests that this reintegration can occur in contemplation when the practitioner experiences the reunion of the empirical self (*ātman*) with the divine force of *Brahman*, while phenomenology outlines the merging of subject-object-time-space through the processes of *flesh*.

Csikszentmihályi's critical examination of negative affect in psychology. It was Csikszentmihályi's reversal of the focus on negative affect or 'psychic entropy' in his psychological research that led to the *flow* theory. He believes that social psychology of the time had omitted the concept of self, leaving this research to focus predominately on the cognitive (Csikszentmihályi 1992). By re-focusing on positive affect and reengaging 'self' concepts, he found that the contents of consciousness were resolved in a state of psychic negentropy or *flow*.

In this research Csikszentmihályi developed his theory of the *teleonomy of the self*, which he suggests is one of three basic human drives. The other two are genetic teleonomy, in which the propensity of biological patterns is to replicate their kind across time, and cultural teleonomy, "which tends to impose social norms and values on human behavior in order to replicate itself across generations" (Csikszentmihályi 1992, p. 25). Csikszentmihályi believes that these two don't fully account for the evolution of consciousness. He contends that the "motivation to go beyond established patterns of behaviour is due to an organizing principle of a different kind" (Csikszentmihályi 1992, p. 28). This emergent teleonomic principle of the self is the 'goal-seeking tendency' that shapes the choices we make. The drive for order and pleasure are inherent in this principle and both can be found in *flow*. The greater clarity, purpose and coherence it provides stands in opposition to:

the formless, confusing, and often frustrating conditions of normal, everyday life. Because it reaffirms the order of the self and is so enjoyable, people will attempt to replicate it whenever possible. This tendency to repeat the flow experience is the emergent teleonomy of the self. (Csikszentmihályi 1992, p. 34)

The integration that can be experienced in *flow* and other contemplative states of deep focus is an important aspect of the teleonomy of the self in this project, because this force is, I suggest, equivalent to the *feeling nexus*. This suggestion is reliant on the understanding of contemplative consciousness as ecological as it was outlined in Chapter Two. This was primarily through the work of Wolfgang Fasching, who described contemplation as the event of the practitioners' co-emergence with their

contexts (2008, p. 467)¹³⁷ and the “taking place of the phenomenality of phenomena” (ibid.). Contemplative states according to Fasching are the presence of phenomenality, rather than the ‘inner’ or ‘outer’ awareness of objects of consciousness.

In contemplative states “one experiences oneself within every moment as, simultaneously, the stillness wherein all movement takes place” (Fasching 2008, p. 480). Fasching claims that this is not a metacognitive awareness of an objectless consciousness, or as Rowlings (2009) asserts, the contemplative state is not an object revealed by the *natural attitude* but that it is the attitude itself. Yoga would suggest that this ‘attitude’ or Fasching’s ‘stillness’ is *Brahman*, and that the practitioners’ experience of their I-consciousness dissolving into the moment of stillness or presence occurs as they realise the correspondence between their *ātman* (transcendental self) and *Brahman*. Also, the divine transcendence of *Brahman* is thought to be a presence or consciousness interwoven through all reality, which allows for the reunion of the individual self (*jīva-ātman*) with the transcendental ground of *Brahman*. Presence, or stillness in movement, can then be understood as both the product of *Brahman*’s influence and *Brahman*. The inherence of *Brahman* provides for the interrelational nature of contemplative states, which is what facilitates engagement with the *feeling nexus* and the integrative experiences that many of the co-researchers reported.

Interrelationality, equilibrium, integration

The co-researchers who maintained a regular contemplative practice, experienced this interrelational force through the stages of the *learning feelings* process. Initially, they sensed pre-predicative *feelings* that sometimes remained, as was described earlier, like traces or markers in their bodies. At this stage their experience of the interrelationality underpinning their *feelings* was pre-conscious. If the co-researchers developed regular contemplative practices they became increasingly familiar with their contemplative interiority. The more they practised the more they gained confidence in their interiority, and the more they encountered *feeling markers* left behind from earlier contemplative experience. Eventually this supplied an internal map, and it is this map and the *feelings*

¹³⁷ Fasching elaborates this with his proposition that, “I experience myself as the very event of co-emergence of touched object and touching body in the touch, not as something “‘within’ the body but as the presence of the object as well as of the body” (2008, p. 480).

it charted which broadened the co-researchers' ability to navigate their internal landscapes.

Regular exploration of the contemplative interior, guided by these *feeling maps*, expanded the co-researchers' understanding of themselves. This was supported by the internal sense of equilibrium that developed through regular experience, which enhanced their ability to engage the world in a more balanced and equanimous manner. This kind of contemplative immersion in a pervasive interrelationality can be understood as a form of entrainment as increased experience of it enabled the co-researchers to *feel*, and in a sense become the interrelationality. This resulted in the realignment of their fragmented sense of self with a reintegrated, balanced 'true self'.¹³⁸

Experience of this balanced 'self' is described by Yoga as a state of self-transcendence. It is the transformation of consciousness, where self-identity extends beyond the limitations of the ego, which results in "an exalted and expanded sense of identity and being" (Whicher 1998(a), p. 9). When the elemental self (*bhūtātman*) or psychophysical being remains confined to the *saṃsāric*¹³⁹ world of conflicting dualities (loss and gain, pleasure and pain), it is constantly undergoing change, which can result in pain or dissatisfaction (*duḥkha*). However, the transcendent self remains unaffected, and it is suggested here that it is the co-researchers' experience of this 'self' (which is inherently interrelational through *Brahman*) in contemplation that supports the positive changes they reported.

Phenomenology suggests that the changes that can occur through this experience of 'self' naturally result from immersion in the *invisible* (the invisible inner framework or *membrure*), as it is the "proper mode of existence" (Singer & Dunn 2000, p. 130). It also emphasises that everything that is *visible* is brought into being by the *invisible*, which is the "transparency behind the sensible" (ibid.). Similarly, Yoga explains the positive changes in the adherent as the result of their continuing and increasingly refined engagement with *Brahman* the divine absolute. This is transformative not

¹³⁸ The true self or *ātman* experience, as defined by the co-researchers, is detailed in Chapter Seven.

¹³⁹ *Saṃsāra* (flow, constant flux of events) is understood as the condition of the phenomenal world, as opposed to the transcendental world or *Brahman*. The phenomenal or *saṃsāric* existence is impermanent because it is made up of a constant flow of events. *Saṃsāra* is also often used to denote the suffering of the phenomenal world, for it is "above all, the domain of *karma* and rebirth and thus of unmitigated suffering (*duḥkha*)" (Feuerstein 1990, p. 308).

because they are taken to a realm beyond the range of themselves through contemplation but because they find that *Brahman* or the *invisible* is inherent in them.

Stage four in summary

The altered sense of space and time that a number of the co-researchers described can be understood as the slippage in perception which is required to perceive the ecologies of self and context that Merleau-Ponty outlines in his theory of perception, reversibility and time. His definition of an ‘ongoing becoming’, made possible by the chiasmic folding back of perception on itself, was found here to be descriptive of the co-researchers’ contemplative experiences of time as a *flow* state. Their accounts of time and space merging were also found to be similar to the peak experiences Mihály Csikszentmihályi terms *flow*.

The benefits of the altered time-space experience in education, outlined in this section, are illustrated in the pleasure that can result from deep focus. In particular, the importance of intrinsic pleasure in *flow* or deep focus was emphasised in the development of contemplative pedagogy. Intrinsic pleasure is also acknowledged in Yoga philosophy in its schema of progressively more concentrated states of meditation which can result in *samādhi* or ecstasy/enstasy. Altered perception of time is linked to *samādhi*, for these experiences of time indicate progression in the adherents’ path toward *samādhi*. Yoga’s model of increasingly refined contemplative experience of time, ranging across the continuum of clock to zero-time, concludes through progressive states of *samādhi*, which culminates in *asamprajñāta-samādhi* or supraconscious enstasy, and finally *kaivalya*.

In their contemplative practices the co-researchers generally experienced *dhāraṇā* (concentration), *dhyāna* (meditation) and occasionally the earliest stages of *samādhi*, where they engaged an interrelationality that is described in the definition of *samādhi* as ‘putting together’. It is the empirical self and the ultimate interrelational ground of *Brahman* that are joined in *samādhi*. Contemplative experience of this interrelationality is defined here as the engagement with an elemental substrate containing the *feeling nexus*. This definition, developed through the co-researchers’ reports and propositions from phenomenology and Yoga, provides for the internal reintegration that a number of

the co-researchers reported from their contemplative immersion in the ecologies of the interior. Finally, the benefits of engaging an integrating force and other aspects of the altered space-time experience, which can result from contemplation, support this project's call for the development of pedagogy congruent with the contemplative.

In summary

The co-researchers' experiences of affectivity expanding beyond their everyday emotions – of it *feeling* field-like and being imbued with other modes of being – led to their realisation of an inherent interrelationality. In this third stage of the *contemplative trajectory* they touched into an elemental ecological ground that Yoga understands to be *Brahman* the divine transcendence. The contemplative practices of Yoga articulate a path to *Brahman* through the egoless state of *samādhi* or bliss. The understanding of *samādhi* as the reunion of the individual self with the supreme self or *parama-ātman*¹⁴⁰ not only illustrates the drawing-together activities of the *feeling nexus*, but supports an understanding of the interrelational experience and ensuing sense of integration that the co-researchers reported.

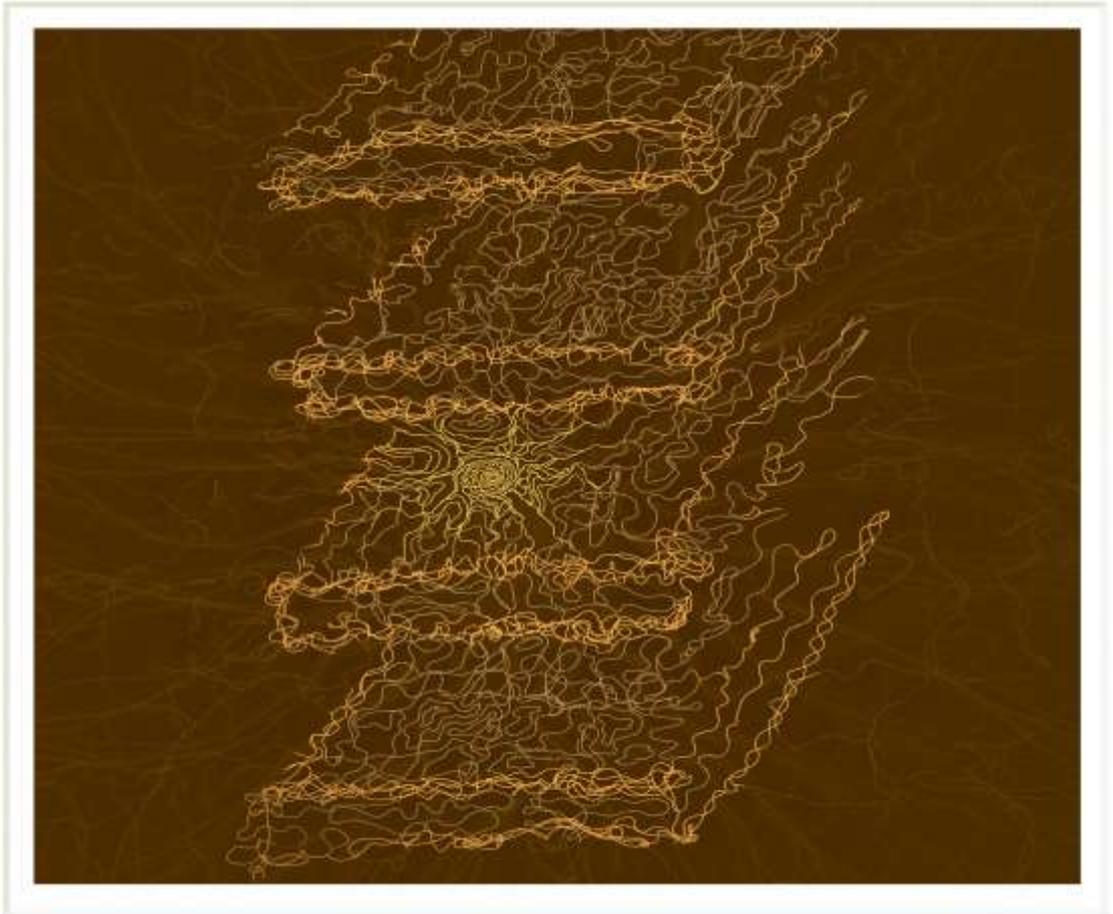
This was further developed in the critical examination of the co-researchers' altered experiences of time and space in the fourth stage of the *contemplative trajectory*. Csikszentmihályi's (1992/2009) theory of *flow* was correlated with Yogic and phenomenological concepts of nonlinear time to elaborate the co-researchers' apperception of an integrative force, which appeared to realign them with the fundamental intertwining ground of themselves. The reason that engaging this force in contemplation actuates benefits, such as enhanced equanimity, may be answered by Csikszentmihályi's (1992/2009) proposition of the *teleonomy of the self*. This is a third force that he includes with two basic human drives, genetic and cultural teleonomy, and defines as a unifying goal-seeking drive. He links this proposition with the intrinsic pleasure that can arise from *flow* or contemplation, suggesting that it is a goal commonly sought. The pleasure arising from *flow* results in part from the order or balance that practitioners experience in *flow-like* states, which Csikszentmihályi

¹⁴⁰ The *parama-ātman* is directly linked to *Brahman* through Yoga's pantheistic conception that *Brahman* subsists in everything, and the "identity of the *Brahman* with the innermost self...in human beings, called *ātman*" (Feuerstein 1990, p. 65).

confirms with his assertion that *flow* is a 'sense' that "reaffirms the order of the self" (Csikszentmihályi 1992, p. 34). The need in education to cultivate the pleasure, balance and equanimity which can result from states of deep focus was emphasised in suggestions for the development of contemplative pedagogy. The discussion of these educational methods led to the central premise of this thesis – the proposition that the integrating force of deep focus in contemplation founds learning through contemplation because of its ability to reunite the fragmented sense of 'self'.

The fifth and last stage of the *contemplative trajectory* is analysed in the following chapter. In this stage the co-researchers encountered a primordial ground-of-being that is examined using phenomenology, Yoga philosophy and the co-researchers' experiences of this substrate

Chapter Five: Stage Five of the *Contemplative Trajectory*: The Ground-of-being



Cameron Beau Wylie Foster, 2013

I don't know why anyone would paint things that they didn't love, because when you get to paint something, you get to think about focus and almost become the object you're looking at, you know, and what is that about? I don't know, that's another space, which is very meditative where thought stops and time stands still...That's probably why I can meditate because I already know what that feels like, now there's this place in my brain, I can find that spot because I've been there before. (Interview with Heather, 24th October, 2009)

This excerpt from Heather's story highlights the fifth and final stage of the trajectory through contemplation. It is the co-researchers' experience of a foundational space or ground, which many described in a similar fashion to Heather. This ground is a place of paradox, one that is both in and outside of them, a space that has a somatic dimension and is simultaneously incorporeal. It is both a ubiquitous field underpinning the stages of the *contemplative trajectory* and its final destination, a space that the co-researchers didn't realise they could access until they found themselves there, and I would argue it is the substrate of the *feeling nexus*. Paradox and familiarity, some of the co-researchers' first experiences of the ground-of-being, were often followed by an awareness of it having different levels and layers, a witness consciousness and relational properties.

This chapter critically examines the co-researchers' experiences of these aspects with Yogic and phenomenological conceptions of this quale of the interior. It starts by sketching the co-researchers' ground-of-being experiences, then links them to suggestions for the design of contemplative pedagogy. The two sections that follow are dedicated to phenomenological and Yogic examination of the elemental ground, which leads to a call from educational practitioner/researchers for the inclusion of subjective experience in pedagogy. Relevant pedagogical suggestions are then made in the analysis of each phase of the ground-of-being. The chapter ends with an investigation of the relations between the ground-of-being and the *feeling nexus*. The co-researchers' growing awareness of an interrelational substrate, outlined in Chapter Four, is expanded in this chapter, providing a comprehensive overview of three central aspects of the ground-of-being.

In this last stage of the *contemplative trajectory* the co-researchers gained their most intense experience of an interrelationality or ecology, which is the form of the ground-of-being¹⁴¹ and, I suggest, the *feeling nexus* that resides in it. The co-researchers' sense of their immersion in this ecology, which began in the first stage as they *felt* their bodies becoming permeable, continued through the different phases of the *contemplative trajectory*¹⁴² to culminate in their ground-of-being experiences.

The co-researchers often sensed the ground-of-being¹⁴³ as a 'place' they could inhabit which gave them a feeling of stability or grounding (Morgan 2012). Hannah, at Ramapo College, spoke of finding it both inside herself and as "another place that you kind of reside in as well", where she could be 'more of who she was' (Interview, 22nd November, 2009). Angelica, in Los Angeles, describing the peace she gained from her

¹⁴¹ I use the term 'ground-of-being' as a trope to title the co-researchers' various understandings of their experiences of an 'ultimate ground', which a number described as feeling something 'bigger than themselves'. The term is laden with religious and perennialist meaning, which is beyond the scope of this study to investigate, but Jorge Ferrer's (2002) interpretation of the perennialism associated with the term is useful. Ferrer refers to the distinction that perennialists make between mystical experience that is universal and its historical and cultural determination. He then claims that: "the same mystical experience of nondual Ground of Being would be interpreted as emptiness (*sunyata*) by a Mahayana Buddhist, or Brahman by an Advaita Vedantin, as the union with God by a Christian, or as an objectless absorption (*asamprajñata samadhi*) by a practitioner of Patanjali's yoga. In all cases, the experience is the same, the interpretation different" (p. 74). However, these meanings weren't relevant for the co-researchers as their descriptions of the experience, which is what I am primarily using to examine this phenomenon, were pre-theoretical. While there is a perennialist bias associated with the term 'ground-of-being' I use it in this project as it provides a common term when talking about the co-researchers' varied understandings of the ground-of-being experience. However, as a means to acknowledge the disquiet amongst sections of religious and philosophical inquiry about the universalism inherent in understandings of the term, I frame my use of it with Ferrer's proposition of an approach to perennialism that includes 'transconceptual disclosures of reality', which are discussed later in this chapter.

¹⁴² As has been mentioned in earlier chapters, the *contemplative trajectory* was not always experienced in a linear fashion. A number of the co-researchers moved through the stages in an iterative fashion, others did not experience all the stages, or they engaged them in a different order. This was the case for the ground-of-being – it didn't always come last, some co-researchers didn't experience it at all, and in some cases they didn't experience all the phases of the ground-of-being as they are outlined here.

¹⁴³ Phenomenological ground-of-being discourse often focuses on Heidegger's work in this area, and is widely defined by a range of scholars. In this chapter I draw specifically from David Levin's engagement with Heidegger's theories of embodiment that reference this ground. Although I don't employ the work of other theorists in this area, their understandings of the elemental ground Heidegger defines support this project's conception of it. For example, in his research on affectivity and phenomenology Robert Stolorow (2011) introduces *Befindlichkeit* as "Heidegger's term for the existential ground of affectivity (feelings and mood)...Literally, the word might be translated as 'howonefinds-oneselfness'" (p. 5). Catriona Hanley (2000) describes Heidegger's shift from theory to the "phenomenological description of human poetical involvement with entities" (p. 183), which led to his understanding of an 'ultimate' ground-of-being in the "kinetic praxis of human being in finite transcendence" (ibid.). Leo Elders (1990) states that, "For Heidegger Being is, indeed, the mysterious ground which becomes present in Dasein. It is a source and origin (*Ursprung*) which gives rise to beings without losing itself in what comes forth from it" (p. 47).

yoga practice said, “there is that moment when you go, ok there is this peace, there is this place I can go and it’s always there, and I just keep forgetting to check in more often during the day, because that place isn’t going to change” (Interview, 29th October, 2009). James Morley outlined how it provided the space for a metacognitive ability to develop. He said, “there’s this space in all of us that is not changing, and it gives us a place, a standpoint, so that you can step back, you know?” (Interview, 9th November, 2009).

Hannah, Angelica and Morley’s ground-of-being experiences, and those of other co-researchers, are significant in pedagogy because they illustrate the depth of focus that contemplative education students and teachers can reach. It is a state of consciousness that can lead to stress reduction, increased ability to retain and retrieve information, development of equanimity and metacognitive abilities, and increased resilience that can arise from contemplative immersion in the ground-of-being. While these benefits are not specific to the ground-of-being, as they are generalised to contemplative practice (see: Hart 2008; Lazar et al. 2005; Shapiro et al. 2008), the ground-of-being experience appeared to anchor these benefits for many of the co-researchers. This project’s examination of these benefits supports the calls of contemplative and transformative education pedagogues to include students’ and educators’¹⁴⁴ contemplative inner realities in education (see Beck 1986; Dirkx 1997; Ferrer et al. 2005; Hart 2008; Miller 1994, 2010; Morley 2009; Yob 1995; Zajonc 2006(a), (b), 2008(a), 2010).

These and other theorist/practitioners are defining relevant features of contemplative education including, for some, the ground-of-being experience. Clive Beck in his work on spirituality in education references Hindu and Buddhist concepts of the ground-of-being, which represent the “interconnectedness of reality in the image of the jewel net” (1986, p. 151). Iris Yob (1995), working in the same field as Beck, suggests that notions of the transcendent can be used to replace Christian concepts of God in secular educational settings. She introduces Paul Tillich’s conception of the transcendent as the ground-of-being or ‘ultimate concern’, suggesting it as a substitute for God for students wanting a secular way to understand their metaphysical experiences, which surpass or go “beyond immediate, empirical constructions of the world to indicate its underlying

¹⁴⁴ While the focus here is on students’ contemplative experience, this study understands that many contemplative theorists and educators are practitioners, and therefore have had similar contemplative experiences to their students.

structures or forces” (Yob 1995, p. 104). Yob’s provision of a secular approach to religious and spiritual readings of transcendent experience is more aligned with, but not the only way the co-researchers understood their ground-of-being experiences.

Both Yob and Beck’s findings support the transpersonal nature of the ground-of-being as it is understood in this project, though their research differs in other respects. In particular, their contrasting of the spiritual and secular readings of the ground-of-being experience is distinct from this study’s pluralism. This pluralistic orientation is founded on the co-researchers’ eclectic understandings of their contemplative experience.

Interiority, education and the ground-of-being

Yob, Beck and others aim, as I do, to highlight the importance of subjective experience in education. Specifically, this project focuses on the co-researchers’ navigation of their internal landscapes. An important aspect of the contemplative interior is the ground-of-being experience, for it ‘grounds’ the other stages of the *contemplative trajectory*. It is also a common *quale* of contemplative subjectivity and can be found in consciousness and education research (see Beck 1986; Gardner 1996; Miller 1994; Yob 1995; Zinnbauer 1997).

The ground-of-being and other aspects of the contemplative interior can be found in a number of alternative approaches in education. For example, in his development of the two aspects of the self, John Dirkx suggests that the ‘interior’, which he partners with ‘identity’, needs to be engaged to enable a more integrated approach to education (2006, p. 125). The interior is also fundamental to ‘perspective transformation’, which is the change in meaning making that is so important in learning through contemplation. Carolyn Clark and Arthur Wilson (1991) describe perspective transformation as the core of transformative education, and I would argue, contemplative education.

The understanding of perspective transformation used here is derived from the revision of seminal work on cognitive change by the transformative education theorist Jack Mezirow. His work on cognition and transformation has been taken up by a second wave of theorists such as Patricia Cranton and Merv Roy (2003), John Dirkx (1998, 1997, 2006, 2008), John Miller (2010) and others, who propose that transformation in

education involves more than cognitive reflection and cultural influences. They believe that the process of transformation must also include the extra-rational. As Cranton and Roy outline, perspective transformation engages the “rational, affective, extra-rational, experiential, or any combination – depending on the individual and the context” (2003, p. 90). With this understanding, and in brief, perspective transformation is the process by which old systems of meaning-making are transformed through rational and extra-rational processes. In general this conception of perspective transformation is used throughout the project, and specifically the focus in this chapter is change through extra-rational experience of the ground-of-being.

Perennialism

It is important to describe the way that the perennialism often implicit in ground-of-being discourse is understood here. This is due to the rigid universalism frequently associated with perennial philosophy (Ferrer 2002, p. 94), and the particular ways that the co-researchers’ syncretic understandings of their contemplative practices generally confounded this universalism. Their combining of a variety of religious, spiritual and cultural forms can be described as both a form of ‘secularised Western esotericism’ (Rotehnberg & Valley 2008, p. 96), and as an attribute of what Linda Woodhead and Kawanam Fletcher (2004) term *self-religions*.¹⁴⁵ The development of these *religions* is, they suggest, an outcome of globalisation and developments in technology, in particular the internet, which has facilitated real and virtual movement among diverse cultures (Woodhead & Fletcher 2004, p. 320).¹⁴⁶ Some of the co-researchers’ contemplative practices could be described as *self-religions*, while others drew from established religions. However, in general they engaged a spiritual pastiche of fragments of their family’s religion and aspects of the secular and religious forms supporting their contemplative practices.

¹⁴⁵ *Self-religion* was a term coined by Heelas in his “Californian self religions and socializing the subjective”, in Eileen Barker (ed.) (1982) *New religious movements: A perspective for understanding society*. New York: Edwin Mellen, pp. 69-85.

¹⁴⁶ According to Woodhead and Fletcher (2004), New Religious Movements (NRMs) “have drawn from a wide range of Christian, non-Christian and esoteric/occult sources to which people living in the global village can have access. The process of globalization has facilitated the movement of people and ideas” (p. 320).

There was little perennialist bias in the co-researchers' understanding of their practices, though it can be found in aspects of the theoretical foundations of this project. As this theory is pivotal in this chapter, I introduce Jorge Ferrer's (2002) resolution of the perennialist-contextualist debate. Ferrer begins by agreeing with the perennialist suggestion that the entry into states such as the ground-of-being experience may be accompanied or followed by a 'transconceptual disclosure of reality'. This is, he states, "due to the radical interpenetration between cognizing self and cognized world, once the self-concept is deconstructed, the world may reveal itself to us in ways that transcend conceptualization" (Ferrer 2002, p. 145). However, at this point he departs from perennialism to posit that there is a multiplicity of "transconceptual disclosures of reality" (ibid.). Reading the inherent perennialism in this chapter's theory through the conception of the 'multiplicity of disclosures' may help ameliorate it.

Phenomenological and Yogic understandings of the ground-of-being

Both phenomenology and Yoga agree on the presence of a pre-ontological ground and its founding of phenomenal existence. They both suggest that reflective or contemplative engagement with it can be useful, and while they do this in different ways, they understand the contemplative to be a means for individuals to experience the wholeness of themselves. In education the importance of the sense of wholeness that can arise from the ground-of-being and other aspects of contemplative experience is obvious when one considers the difference between a pedagogical exchange with educators and students who feel balanced and whole, and those who do not.

Phenomenology and the ground-of-being

Phenomenology, as the study of first-person experience, is particularly useful in this project's examination of various aspects of contemplation in education, including the ground-of-being experience. This is because phenomenology's first-person orientation provides a means to 'word' the co-researchers' reports from the often ineffable realms of contemplation. The part that contemplation plays in revealing the ground-of-being is outlined by David Levin (1999) in his critique of Heidegger's project on being and embodiment. It starts with Heidegger's use of the term *befindlichkeit* as the:

‘pre-ontological understanding of being’, which attunes and destines our gestural being...that is to be found and retrieved by a reflection which parts company with the subjectivity of the *ego-cogito* and its co-emergent object, in order to recollect ‘beneath the subject’. (Levin 1999, p. 142)

This recollection ‘beneath the subject’ is significant, for it can be read as a form of contemplation that can lead to the ground-of-being experience. The co-researchers’ reports of this ground highlight the subtlety and richness of the lives that they live ‘beneath’ the subject (themselves). Mike, a student at LMU, described it as feeling as though he went somewhere else, “like you go out of your body, or you go into your body in a way that you’re not normally in it, it’s a really trippy feeling to try and imagine yourself outside of your body just free from attachment” (Interview, 21st October, 2009). He went on to describe how useful he found this sense of detachment saying that, “you’re tight and clenched and you’re holding on, then when you do yoga it opens the body up, it opens up the muscles and that allows you to open the mind up” (ibid.). The potential for positive change that can result from contemplative experiences such as the ground-of-being signals the importance of addressing this and other aspects of students’ contemplative subjectivities.

There are similarities between the co-researchers’ ground-of-being experiences and a foundational state in phenomenology. David Levin (1999) outlines this state in his account of Martin Heidegger’s discourse on the body, which Levin ‘puts to work’ in a phenomenology of embodiment. He starts by positing a ‘thinking’ that “takes place in the life of our feet and hands and eyes” (Levin 1999, p. 123). This is a thinking beyond metaphysics that takes us deeply into the body, to produce among other aspects the ‘body of mood’. In his questioning of what this and other aspects of the ‘lived body’ might be, Levin describes a ‘field of motility’, a dimension in which the choreography of all motility takes place. To perceive this field, an individual must pay close attention to the way that they experience their bodies. This type of somatic focus, which can be present in contemplation, helps us sense the “tone of our gestures” (Levin 1999, p. 123), which I suggest are similar to the expanded *feelings* that the co-researchers described as their contemplative practices deepened.

The heightened somatic awareness that can lead to these *feelings* is a significant aspect of Heidegger's developmental process outlined in *Being and time*. This process involves our experience as bodily beings, and is founded on embodied engagement with the pre-ontological (Levin 1999, p. 135). It is the 'grace' of this form of bodily engagement or attunement (*stimmung*)¹⁴⁷ inherent in pre-ontological being which allows us to experience ourselves as "woven into a field or clearing (Merleau-Ponty would speak, here, of "*la chair*," an elemental flesh) that we share with all others" (ibid.). The interrelational force implicit in *stimmung* is suggestive of the form of the *feeling nexus*. It is also indicative of the *feeling nexus* experience, and may be what founds the co-researchers' sense of becoming porous in their encounters with the ground-of-being. In his critique of *stimmung*, Levin uses Heidegger's development of Herakleitos's *logos* and *legein* to examine articulatory gesture. He introduces Heidegger's translation of these terms beyond the common understanding of *logos*, meaning 'word', 'speech', 'discourse', and *legein*,¹⁴⁸ the corresponding verb 'to speak' or 'give account'. Heidegger suggests a more 'primordial' understanding as a *gathering* and *laying down*.

Proceeding from Heidegger's development of the meaning of *legein* and *logos* is a debate related to the etymology of the *legein*, which provides further clues to its processes and ground. This debate is focused on what initially appears to be two conflicting meanings, either 'gathering' or 'stating'. In defining the *legein* as 'gathering', Stephen Ross (1997) proposes that it is the "gathering of things into their *parousia*, their 'presence' (*Anwesenheit*) in the now, the 'present' (*Gegenwart*), of the *logos*" (p. 2). Whereas George Pattison (2000) describes the *legein* in terms of 'stating', for he indicates that the *legein* is etymologically related to the Germanic word 'lay'. He suggests that this understanding has led to the *legein* being known as the 'laying out' or 'stating' of an issue. These two contrasting definitions are resolved by John Caputo's (1986) classification, which is based on *legein*'s Greek origins. Caputo proposes that *logos* comes from the verb *legein*, "which means, as Heidegger has consistently maintained over the years, 'to collect together', 'to lay one thing beside

¹⁴⁷ Levin (1999) describes the way that Heidegger uses *stimmung* as 'bodily attunement', though states that it is "usually translated as "moodedness" and "attunement," but usually given an interpretation that is far removed from a phenomenology of embodiment and sensibility" (p. 131).

¹⁴⁸ The elemental nature of the *legein* and *logos* described in detail in Chapter Three is important here, firstly, because the *legein* is analogous with the *feeling nexus*, and secondly, like the *feeling nexus* it resides in an elemental substrate, which for the *legein* is the *logos*.

another,' 'to arrange one thing after another'...Thus *legein* means to let something lie forth" (1986, p. 78). Thus the *legein*¹⁴⁹ gathers together as a means to 'state' or 'lie forth'.

The way that the *legein* lays forth what it has gathered together is important here, because it is indicative of its pre-ontological ground. This is illustrated through the relations of *logos* and *legein*, for while *legein* is to speak, gather, or lay down, "Logos is the original **saying** of **being** that makes language possible...it is the original source out of which the gathering process proceeds" (Schalow & Denker 2010, p. 178). And returning to Levin's examination of motility, the *legein*, as an expression of the *logos*, is a fundamental gathering or laying down process underpinning motility. While the *logos* is its original source, or the primordial ground of the *legein*'s gathering.

This understanding of the ground of *logos* and the *legein*'s origins in it illustrate the relations between the *feeling nexus* and its substrate. The *legein* and the *feeling nexus* reside in a pre-ontological ground-of-being where they engage the foundational aspects of language and the modes of being respectively. As they are elemental and subtle manifestations of this primal field, contemplation is one of the primary ways that the *legein*, *feeling nexus* and their substrates can be felt or known.

Yoga and the ground-of-being

In Yoga the ground-of-being is consciousness, though not the 'what it is like'¹⁵⁰ form of everyday awareness, but "the fully awakened consciousness of Self (*ātman*) or *Brahman*" (the divine absolute) (Whicher 1998(a), p. 14). This is the transcendental self that "cannot be grasped since it is the grasper, the seer, of everything" (Feuerstein 1990, p. 40). While the Self is said to be one's authentic nature, it is not an object like other objects, in that it cannot be analysed or simply obtained. For as Whicher states,

¹⁴⁹ James Risser (1999) supports Caputo's proposition and introduces the concept of an 'essential' or foundational aspect of language, "Derived from the verb *legein*, *logos* (in Lat, *legere*, in Ge. *legen*) denotes a laying before, a laying out, a lying there. Heidegger claims that this originary significance of *legein* illuminates the presupposed essential nature of language" (p. 196).

¹⁵⁰ This is phenomenal experience, which is described by John Hicks as the "informational input from external reality being interpreted by the mind in terms of its own categorical scheme and thus coming to consciousness as meaningful phenomenal experience" (2004, p. 243).

“how can one ‘acquire’ *that* which one already *is*?” (Whicher 1998(a), p. 18). Yoga suggests that it is a matter of the *ātman* choosing when it will reveal itself, something which Hannah, Agnes Hillary¹⁵¹ and other co-researchers experienced when they discovered that they already knew the ground-of-being or their authentic Self.¹⁵²

The discovery of a ‘true’ or ‘essential’ self is an important part of the ground-of-being experience for the co-researchers. It often occurred after their uncertain passage through somatic feelings and was described by Agnes, an educator at LMU, when speaking about her students’ discovery of it:

I think that most of my students perceive it as peace; it’s just almost like coming home to their true nature. Even though much of their time is spent projecting this stuff onto themselves like, ‘what I need to be’ or ‘have to be’ or ‘this is what I am to that person and that person’, which means that they never allow their true self or inner being to just ‘be’, with no expectations. (Interview, 9th October, 2009)

The importance of this stage in contemplation for pedagogy relates to the way that it lends a sense of ‘mineness’ (beyond ego-consciousness) or stability to the amorphous, pre-figurative experiences that students may initially encounter in contemplation.

Contemplative educators can encourage the ‘true self’ experience and the ensuing stability by providing educational settings conducive to contemplation.

Yoga posits the ability to attain this awareness on an understanding of a correlation (*saṃyoga*) of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, the fundamental elements of the universe. *Puruṣa*, is formless, transcendental, pure and unchanging, while all phenomenal reality is said to issue from *prakṛti* or Nature. Although these two forces are the inverse of each other, they are brought into relationship through the interplay of the *guṇas*. These constituent qualities of *prakṛti* – *sattva* (beingness), *rajas* (energy), *tamas* (inertia) – enable the

¹⁵¹ These co-researchers’ experiences are described in more detail in the section titled ‘Layers and levels’, which follows later in this chapter.

¹⁵² Ian Whicher (1998(a)) refers to the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, when he proposes that the *ātman*’s place is at the peak of a hierarchy of levels of existence. In the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* this hierarchy is outlined in an instruction to adherents, “Know the Self as lord of the chariot, and the body as the chariot. Know further that the intellect (*buddhi*) is the driver, whereas the mind-organ (*manas*) is the rein. The senses, they say, are the horses, and the sense-objects their arena...Kaṭha distinguishes seven levels that comprise the hierarchy of existence: the senses (*indriya*); the sense-objects (*viśaya*); the mind-organ (*manas*); the intellect (*buddhi*); the ‘great self’ (*māhān ātmā*) or ‘great one’ (*mahat*) – the initial level of manifest existence” (Whicher 1998(a), p. 18).

relationality of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* because of the luminosity of the highest *sattvic* level of Nature. This most refined aspect of the *guṇas* has the ability to reflect the light of *puruṣa* or consciousness throughout the individual.

Transcendental and phenomenal consciousness

The triggering of this inner core or unchanging pre-ontological consciousness or ground, through the reflection of *puruṣa*, can start in sensory or phenomenal awareness. This aspect of consciousness is one of the two primary forms identified by Yoga – the other is the numinous. Transcendent consciousness is said to be an aspect of the divine for “the transcendent Source of the world is identical with the transcendent core of the human being; *Brahman* and *ātman* are one in identity” (Whicher 1998(a), p. 14). However, the underlying transcendental nature of the phenomenal can be obfuscated by the working of *prakṛti*, with its processes leading to the misidentification with mental activity, as they veil our true nature or ‘consciousness-as-such’ (Rao 2005). The East-West philosopher Koneru Ramakrishna Rao describes this numinous form of consciousness as “essentially non-relational and yet foundational for all awareness and knowledge” (2005, p. 10). This and the phenomenal form of consciousness is realised in different ways, with the former being “apprehended in immediate intuition where there is no distinction between subject and object. In its phenomenal form, it is sensory awareness. It is awareness with form and content” (Rao 2005, 11).

Transcendental states can be realised in contemplation and lead to ground-of-being experience, for in essence they are the ground-of-being.¹⁵³ Neville, a Sanskrit student at LMU, perceived these two forms in his meditation practice. This occurred when he started to experience the ground-of-being as a merging of fields, which he was able to grasp through his intuitive mind. This form is one of two kinds of mind; the other is the superficial mind that he said tended to pull things apart:

It’s almost like different pieces are pulled apart and everything gets separated inside, and once everything’s separated it’s very hard to do anything I find...It’s like I can be left with the ability to do some rational thinking, which I don’t

¹⁵³ This conception of the ground-of-being is described in more detail in Chapter Two’s analysis of the contemplative state of consciousness.

really find very helpful most of the time because it's not based on intuition...it's just that there's more of you when you're in that whole state, when intuition just happens. (Interview, 2nd November, 2009)

Neville's identification of two kinds of mind that are a part of the same field is similar to Yoga's understanding of the mind, which is an 'activity' or process that bridges both the transcendent and physical. Rao describes it as the "instrumentality that faces consciousness on one side and the brain and the rest of the physical world on the other" (2005, p. 3). The transcendent aspect or consciousness-as-such (absolute consciousness) does not take a role in the activities of the mind or any other physical activities. Nonetheless, it is said to enliven the unconscious mental forms or *vṛttis*, created through the sensory system, when the light of *puruṣa* is reflected onto them by *sattva*.

Although the mind is thought to be unconscious, its relationship with *puruṣa* allows it to manifest subjective and phenomenal awareness. This relationship produces embodied consciousness, though it is also what can lead to a misidentification with the modifications of the mind (*cittavṛttinirodhaḥ*). According to Rao, *puruṣa* can bind itself to the mind creating a false sense of identity in which the individual cannot sense themselves as *puruṣa*. Yoga's contemplative practices can remedy this, as they offer adherents experiences of absolute consciousness. This initially happens in glimpses of the Self or *ātman*, and finally through the complete cessation of *cittavṛttinirodhaḥ*, which then results in the dissolution of the I-consciousness as the adherent apperceives the equivalence of their *ātman* and *Brahman*.

The correspondence between the individual and *Brahman* is mirrored in all of creation, as *Brahman* is the origin of the cosmos and omnipresence. In this sense "Brahman is the ground-of-being behind all things" (Matthews 2012, p. 79). Conceiving of *Brahman* as the basis of reality explains the paradoxical experience of it as both an inherent field of interrelationality and the destination of the *contemplative trajectory*. It explains the co-researchers sense of 'mineness' or familiarity with this ground through the understanding of it as an aspect of their *ātman* or true self. Ground-of-being experience also helped them assimilate the pre-predicative and somatic aspects of the new meanings they made from engaging this ground.

Ground-of-being experience and pedagogy

Paradoxically, the familiarity that the co-researchers reported from ground-of-being experience arose from an egoless state – a state in which the “barriers of human control” (Solomon 1994, p. 142) can become permeable, so allowing the practitioner to enter collective and intersubjective experience (ibid.). The pedagogical significance of these states relate to the intersubjective construction of knowledge, which moves beyond the purely cognitive and “appears to be involuntary, through acculturation” (Lerman 1996, p. 135). In his work on intersubjectivity in mathematics education, Stephen Lerman (1996) emphasises the relations between individual subjectivities and intersubjective activity in the classroom. He also argues that the “valuing of thought divorced from action, and of decontextualized knowledge, mystifies learning and knowledge and leads to oppression rather than empowerment” (Lerman 1996, p. 145). The somatic and experiential aspects of contemplation can remedy this, while its deep focus can result in the egoless and unbounded states that provide access to intersubjective learning.

There are further implications for pedagogy linked to the intersubjectivity of the ground-of-being experience, which relate to the teachers ‘presence’ in the classroom. Educator Clifford Mayes describes this as their ‘non-doing’ - a pedagogical reflective practice that results in student-centred teaching where the teacher embodies and reveals “sheer presence” (2002, p. 710). Mayes describes this as a form of hospitality that “requires me to be there, with my senses focused on the group at hand, listening rather than thinking about what I’m going to say – observing the students, the texts, and the sensory world of the classroom” (ibid.). Pedagogical experience of this form of mindfulness can lead to questions about the ethics of intersubjectivity.

These ethical considerations are grounded in the empathy and feeling for others that can arise through the openness and interrelationality of these states. Mayes believes that it is necessary, when engaging others in these heightened states, to release one’s ego, intentionality and consciousness “in the service of the Other. Responsibility for the Other, being-for the Other, means that the self is no longer a self-regulating agent but is passively open and exposed” (Todd 2003, p. 52). The ethics of such relationships lie “in limiting one’s own self-concern” (ibid.). This is regulated by our sensibility, by feeling or sensing the way to respond. This cannot be forced, it relies on the willingness

of the individuals involved and emerges out of a “nonintentional affectivity”; that is, an affectivity that arises spontaneously and conditions responsibility for the Other” (ibid.). It is beyond the scope of this project to investigate the ethics of intersubjective experience in education in detail, though there is much good work in this area (see Biesta 1994; Dhawan 2005; Lamberti 2009; Smythe & Murray 2005).

It is important when designing pedagogy congruent with the *contemplative trajectory* to consider ethical implications, the empathy that can arise in contemplative education, the teachers ‘presence’ in the classroom and the intersubjective construction of knowledge. Pedagogues need to be cognisant of the deep focus, somatic awareness, interrelationality and intersubjectivity, the primordial nature of the ground-of-being and experience of its interspersion of reality, which can result from contemplation. Phenomenology and Yoga provided definitions of these aspects, starting with phenomenology’s conception of an elemental substrate, which it asserts can arise in focused somatic awareness. This may then give rise to the experience of an elemental field of motility and the resulting sense of permeability as the practitioner experiences themselves being ‘woven’ into the field through the interrelationality of *flesh*. The relations of the *legein* and the *logos*, in which the *legein* is an expression of the primordial ground of the *logos*, makes this possible. In addition, Yoga provides *Brahman’s* inherence in all reality as the means for the co-researchers’ familiarity with the ground-of-being and their interrelational experiences of it. These propositions from Yoga and phenomenology for the forces underpinning the integrative experiences that can stem from the ground-of-being are important in the development of pedagogy congruent with the contemplative

Three aspects of the ground-of-being experience

To elaborate the ways in which the co-researchers experienced the ground-of-being, this section provides an overview of three aspects commonly reported by the co-researchers. They are a sensing of layers and levels, a witness consciousness and a form of interrelationality. The following sections define these features of the ground-of-being using the co-researchers’ experiences and this study’s theoretical foundations. The sections introduce relevant educational theory, starting with an examination of the layers and levels experience through Olen Gunnlaugson’s (2007(b)) thesis of generative

dialogue,¹⁵⁴ which includes a form of reflective contemplative practice called ‘presencing’. In the second, I work with Rick Repetti (2010) and Tobin Hart’s (2008) development of the witness consciousness as metacognition. In the third stage of ground-of-being experience I explore the integral approaches of John Dirx (1997), Olen Gunnlaugson (2010), Elizabeth Kasl and Lyle Yorks (2002) and Jorge Ferrer and his colleagues (2005). This educational theory is introduced to support the development of contemplative pedagogy.

Similar to the other phases of the *contemplative trajectory*, these aspects of the last phase, while outlined in a linear fashion, were not always experienced in this way. Therefore if educators choose to use this outline to trace this aspect of their students’ contemplative experience, they should be aware that it isn’t evidence of a progression through more advanced stages. However, it can indicate that their students’ contemplative states are deepening, and it may assist them to support their students’ integration of the new meanings that can arise from contemplation.

Layers and levels

After the co-researchers’ initial experiences of the paradoxical nature of the ground-of-being, many spoke of travelling through different levels and layers to it. This experience was introduced in Chapter Three, where a sense of it formed a part of the co-researchers’ deepening experiences of their inner *feelings*. Their unfocused awareness of it clarified in this final stage of the *contemplative trajectory*, as they began to detect that their ‘inner’ movement had a directionality, which they described as going deeper or ‘going in’. Agnes spoke of experiences in both her practice and those of her students that were “on a different level, it’s a vibration almost” (Interview, 9th October, 2009). Hannah at Ramapo College was surprised to find the ground buried deep within her. On discovering it, she described *feeling* as though she had developed an extra layer to herself “or maybe not developed but you’ve pulled back some curtain to be able to see and feel this other part of yourself” (Interview, 22nd November, 2009). Ken Otter, Director of Leadership Studies at Saint Mary’s College, San Francisco, described the

¹⁵⁴ Gunnlaugson defines generative dialogue as “a practice of conversation that draws on a broader spectrum of ways of knowing mediated by ‘meta-awareness’...rather than discursive reason” (2007(b), p. 135).

mindfulness that can lead to an awareness of the ground-of-being as our ‘natural state’. He went on to say, “I think that we are evolutionarily oriented towards mindfulness” (Interview, 6th November, 2009), therefore suggesting an inherent relationship between contemplation and the elemental ground that can be revealed through different levels of contemplative practice.

The co-researchers’ growing familiarity with the contemplative descent into different layers of their *inner landscapes* led to their development of what can be described as *feeling maps* of the interior. These *maps* stabilised their inner journeys, allowing them to relax into the experience and to go ‘deeper’. Along with these *maps* they created unique *feeling* (metaphorical) *languages*¹⁵⁵ of the interior. Hannah, for example, spoke of her yoga practice taking her through fragmented levels of focus to ‘a sense of herself’ inside her body. The reintegration that occurred in these different levels can be understood as an outcome of her pre-predicative engagement with the drawing together process of the *feeling nexus*. *Feeling*, then ‘wording’ this experience and the changing sense of herself that followed, enabled her to map it through several journeys to what she described as her ‘centre’. This pre-predictive, somatic, and cognitive engagement with her ‘centre’ rooted the new sensations in her body, where it remained as a sensual marker that she could return to when needed.

The co-researchers’ growing awareness and movement through different levels in the ground-of-being can be understood as of form of ‘meta-awareness.’¹⁵⁶ It is, according to the integral and transformative education theorist Olen Gunnlaugson, an advanced form of cognition (Gunnlaugson 2007(a), p. 52). He proposes that regular experience of this, and other forms of meta-awareness, can lead to what he terms ‘clearing’ or ‘receptive opening’. Drawing from Martin Heidegger, Gunnlaugson describes clearing as the ability to “make experiential contact with emotional, intuitive, imaginative, kinaesthetic, and other forms of knowing” (Gunnlaugson 2007(b), p. 140). He combines this meta-awareness with ‘presencing’ a form of contemplative practice

¹⁵⁵ These *maps* and *languages* are described in more detail in the following two chapters.

¹⁵⁶ Gunnlaugson provides the integral theorist Thomas Jordan’s definition of meta-awareness, “Meta-awareness means awareness of the sensorimotor schematas, emotions, desires and thoughts that tumble through our being. Instead of being had by one’s habitual behavioural patterns, emotions, desires and thoughts, meta-awareness means that there is a locus of witnessing in consciousness that can make the behaviours, emotions, desires and thoughts objects of attention.” (Jordan in Gunnlaugson 2007(b), p. 145).

developed by the management theorist Claus Scharmer.¹⁵⁷ Gunnlaugson describes these practices as contemplative and suggests that they help “the learner move beyond reflective discourse...[to a]...deeper category of *self-transcending knowledge*” (2007(b), p. 141). He emphasises that this move to a deeper level of knowing in education requires reflective, contemplative practice.

The importance for contemplative education, in relation to Gunnlaugson’s suggestions and the co-researchers’ reports of positive change through contemplation, is that they are founded on what I term *felt knowing* and *meaning*. By this I mean the pre-predicative *knowing* and *meaning* that can originate in the contemplative interior. Although the co-researchers’ layers and levels experience is just one example of their pre-figurative meaning making, it illustrates the need to understand the richness and complexity of students’ passage through contemplation.

A significant aspect of an educational environment that supports contemplative experience is that firstly, it acknowledges the refined quality of the states of consciousness that students can enter. Following this is the understanding that idiosyncratic *feeling languages* are used to navigate the contemplative interior. It is important to provide a space that understands and is open to *feeling languages*, and this includes the provision for the disorientation that can occur as practitioners’ re-enter or transition from one state to another. This can be done by being attentive to the *languages*, often couched in terms of *felt* and somatic experience that students can return with from contemplation. Educators might, for example, note down words and phrases to catalogue their students’ *felt languages*. It is also important that they do not inadvertently privilege one state over another, the pre-predicative, somatic and cognitive are equally important when working with students engaged in learning through contemplation.

¹⁵⁷ The theories of ‘presencing’ and the related ‘U Methodology of Leading’ were developed by Claus Otto Scharmer, a Senior Lecturer in Leadership at MIT, Boston. They are detailed in Scharmer’s (2009) *Theory U: Leading from the future as it emerges*, and on his website: <http://www.ottoscharmer.com/>

The witness consciousness

As the co-researchers became more familiar with interior contemplative experience, including moving through different layers and levels, a number spoke of encountering a witness, which was the second aspect of their ground-of-being experience. Yoga suggests that this happens when adherents are able to maintain certain levels of *dhṛti* (steadiness), followed by *dhāraṇā* (sustained focus) and then *dhyāna* (meditation, contemplation). This intense focus, which starts with *nirodha* (restriction), enables them to apprehend the *draṣṭri*, seer or witness. In his discussion of the multi-dimensional nature of *nirodha*, Feuerstein (2008) outlines its role in apprehending the *draṣṭri*. Referencing Pātañjali's *Yoga Sūtras*,¹⁵⁸ he suggests that when the 'psycho-mental stoppage' (*nirodha*) is completely applied then the "transcendental Witness-Consciousness shines forth. This Witness-Consciousness, or 'Seer' (*draṣṭri*), is the pure Awareness (*cit*) that abides eternally beyond the senses and the mind, uninterruptedly apperceiving all the contents of consciousness" (Feuerstein 2008, p. 4). James Morley spoke of this witness as a condition of the ground-of-being:

there's that space in all of us that is not changing...a place where you can step back from the flux of all the flowing changes around us, and that's what contemplation does. It gives you a place, a standpoint to step back to – you know, find the 'witness consciousness'...And that witness consciousness is what will save you from being swept up in the whirlwind, the *citta-vṛtti*¹⁵⁹ whirlwind of ordinary attitudes. (Interview, 8th November, 2009)

Isabella at Ramapo College found that the witness she encountered in her yoga practice had similar benefits. In speaking about these positive changes she acknowledged the role it played in her wellbeing. She said:

¹⁵⁸ Pātañjali's *Yoga Sūtras* (aphorisms of Yoga), are described by Feuerstein (1990) as the authoritative exposition of classical Yoga. There is some discrepancy as to when they were composed, ranging from the early post-Christian era to the second century BC. They are composed of four chapters, the first titled *samādhi-pāda* (chapter of ecstasy), the second *sādhana-pāda* (chapter on the means), the third, *vibhūti-pāda* (this deals with paranormal manifestations of yoga or the *siddhis*), and the final chapter, the *kaivalya-pāda* (chapter on aloneness) (Feuerstein 1990, p. 418).

¹⁵⁹ Morley (2009) combines the two Sanskrit words – *citta* (mind or consciousness) and *vṛtti* (whirl, or in Yoga it specifically stands for the fluctuations of consciousness) to describe a 'whirlwind of thought'.

So I think of that in terms of the self with a capital ‘S’, the observer, the seer in yourself, I think that, that self, has been able to come forward a little bit more than it might have been otherwise. You know, I know things now about what to do if I’m feeling low, things that open the front, things that open your heart basically, you know? (Interview, 24th November, p. 2009)

Isabella’s capital ‘S’ Self can be related to the concept of the transcendental ego developed by Husserl, who described it in a “negative fashion quite reminiscent of the Upaniṣadic description of the ‘Self’ as transcendent of the ordinary ego” (Hanna 1993, p. 47). In further explication of the links between Husserl’s ‘transcendent ego’ and the witness consciousness in Yoga, Fred Hanna speaks of it being completely empty of essence-components, indescribable, pure Ego and nothing else (ibid.), which is similar to the formless, transcendental and unchanging *sākṣin* (witness). Similarly, Husserl placed the transcendental ego outside the phenomenal by defining it as being beyond the reduction (the *epoché*). It is completely distinct from the physical world as “the reduced Ego is not a piece of the world so conversely, neither the world nor any worldly Object is a piece of my Ego” (Husserl 1977/1931, p. 26).

Discovering and experiencing the witness was an important stage in co-researchers’ translation of their frequently ineffable contemplative experiences, as it lent a cognitive tone to the *feelings* they were witnessing. Finding this presence, which many began to understand as a part of themselves, not only facilitated their learning but it cemented ongoing engagement with their contemplative practices. Their realisation of the witness aspect of themselves gave them purchase on the *feelings* they were experiencing, including those of the *feeling nexus*, which for many had up until that point felt foreign or disorienting. It provided them with a level of familiarity, directionality and autonomy within the contemplative state that they hadn’t had before. The co-researchers’ growing sense of an internal orientation through their experience of the witness confirmed the benefits of their contemplative practices. In addition, when it is understood as metacognition, the witness facilitated positive change in their educational experience, which is discussed in more detail in Chapter Eight.

Contemplative educators, as Yoga philosophers before them, understand the witness as a form of meta-cognition or ‘space apart’. The educational philosopher Rick Repetti

describes contemplative practices as “metacognitive attention-training exercises” (2010, p. 13). Going ‘meta’ is, he states, “reflecting on the mental processes involved while engaged in the activity” (Repetti 2010, p. 8). While I believe that there are also somatic, affective and transcendent forms of reflection involved in going meta, I agree that metacognition is the simultaneous experiencing and ‘witnessing’ of that experience. The educator and psychologist Tobin Hart (2008) introduces metacognition as one of four general dimensions of contemplative learning. He describes it as a process that enables the practitioner to interrupt automatic patterns of conditioned thinking, sensing and behaving. This in turn can lead to clarity, tolerance and heightened empathy toward one’s self and others. Casey, a student at Ramapo College, simply described it as being able to “see things more clearly, you know, grasp what’s underlying the situation” (Interview, 12th November, 2009).

By being aware of and affirming the witness aspect of the ground-of-being experience, contemplative educators can support their students to move beyond limiting beliefs that may inhibit their ability to integrate new information and/or new conceptions of themselves. It can also help them understand how engaging the witness provides their students with a means to navigate their inner worlds, release limiting belief systems and develop new levels of equanimity.

Interrelationality in and as the ground-of-being

The third aspect of the co-researchers’ ground-of-being experience was their sensing of an interrelationality that occurred as they became oriented in their internal landscape through regular contemplative practice. This last aspect of the ground-of-being experience further defines the thesis of interrelationality that underpins this project. Its continued examination of *Brahman* (divine absolute) as an ubiquitous interrelationality is linked in this chapter with the *interkinaesthetic field* developed by phenomenologist Elizabeth Behnke through Husserl’s work on affectivity. Both Yoga and phenomenology posit these interrelational forces as fields, or ‘grounds’, which are most easily perceived through reflective or contemplative practice.

The co-researchers’ *feeling* of this interrelationality, which I suggest is their engagement with the *feeling nexus* and the ground it resides in, began in their sensing of being

interconnected with, as some described it, ‘everything’, ‘everyone’, ‘something bigger’. Yoga would say that they had apprehended *Brahman*, however fleeting the experience. *Brahman* is “the material cause, the operative cause, the substratum, the controller and the principal of the entire phenomenal world of spiritual and non-spiritual entities” (Fowler 2002, p. 318). As such, there is what Jeaneane Fowler (2002) calls a ‘relational intimacy’ between *Brahman* and all that it creates.

This relationality is derived from the understanding of *Brahman* as the ground-of-all-being, in which “The same principal in each part is in the whole and vice versa” (Kineman & Kumar 2007, p. 1064). The understanding of *Brahman*’s interspersion of reality is described in the fifth chapter of the *Bṛihadāranyaka Upaniṣad*, which is also called the *Madhu Vidyā* (Honey Doctrine). In the *Madhu Vidyā*, *Brahman* is both an animating principal and the principal, which is *madhu*, literally ‘honey’ or ‘sweet product’ and figuratively ‘the effect’. This form of *Brahman* provides its interrelationality, for *madhu* is a single interconnecting reality that flows through every natural system of the universe (Kineman & Kumar 2007).

This relationality was repeatedly found by Cassandra Vieten and her colleagues (2008) in their research on learning and spiritual practice. After conducting nearly 1000 surveys, 60 in-depth interviews with spiritual teachers and leaders, and a longitudinal study with hundreds of people engaged in learning and spiritual practice, they found what Vieten described in the fieldwork interview as a ‘natural state’ of awareness that is relational:

There is an aspect of awareness that appears to be non-personal that appears to be experienced as connected to everything and everyone. Some people will call it consciousness or non-dual awareness, but there appears to be underneath everything, when you really quiet the body and mind, really remove the ego stories, there is something still left, and what’s left seems to be this sort of interconnected field of essential benevolent awareness that’s just sort of holding us all. (Interview, 7th November, 2009)

A number of co-researchers mentioned similar experiences in contemplation, where they *felt* as though they had contacted or connected into an interrelational field. Agnes

spoke of experiencing a one-ness or interrelationality in the yoga classes that she conducts in Los Angeles for Spanish-speaking elders. She felt that this interconnectedness had a number of aspects:

I think there is something inside when your mind is at peace and your spirit...it's just becoming one with everyone else and loosing that ego identity, and I think that maybe when you experience yourself in that different way with a group of people, you feel your shared humanity or something? It does just strip away a lot of the stuff that might make you feel separate from them. (Interview, 9th October, 2009)

A phenomenological reading of this interrelationality was described in Chapter Two by Elizabeth Behnke (2008(a)) as the *interkinaesthetic field*, a term she has modelled on the intercorporeal, which is itself a variation of the intersubjective.¹⁶⁰ That earlier sketch of the *interkinaesthetic field* focused on its role in affectivity, whereas this chapter examines its interrelationality.

In developing this aspect of the *interkinaesthetic field*, Behnke (2008(a)) first outlines how it is felt. She believes that a true understanding of this *field* can only be gained by ‘undergoing it’, for it is a co-constituted phenomenon. As she states, “the specifically affective dimension of the interkinaesthetic field requires *being affected* by it – feeling this affection from within and being moved by it” (Behnke 2008(a), p. 146). A way to do this is to suspend or bracket the adumbrating function of perception. Behnke is describing a form of the *epoché*, which resembles the application of *nirodha*¹⁶¹ (cessation) in Yoga, or the *soft mind*¹⁶² in Buddhism. Behnke proposes that the outcome of this bracketing is the perception of the *interkinaesthetic field*, which can be realised through different forms of contemplative somatic experience. Outlining her engagement with the *interkinaesthetic field*, Behnke describes the interrelationality of

¹⁶⁰ Behnke is drawing from Husserl’s suggestion that “sociality, presupposes lived-bodily intersubjectivity” (Behnke 2008(a), p. 144). Husserl’s intersubjectivity rests on the assumption that the transcendent must be *experienceable* and that the ego experiencing it is real, and that which can be perceived “by one Ego must in principle be conceivable by every Ego” (Husserl in Hermberg 2006, p. 35).

¹⁶¹ *Nirodha* has four levels of restriction: 1) *vytti-nirodha*, cessation or restriction of the fluctuations of the mind; 2) *pratyaya-nirodha*, restriction of presentational ideas; 3) *samskāra-nirodha*, restriction of *samskāra*’s (dynamic imprints on the individual’s psychic life); and 4) *sarva-nirodha*, complete restriction (Feuerstein 1990, p. 239). The first level is referred to here.

¹⁶² The *soft mind* is a contemplative state that is sought in Buddhist meditation, in which thoughts are bracketed and allowed to flow through consciousness without attachment to them.

this somatic affective experience, which she felt in her lived body as “more than just me, for my own flesh functions as a living medium through which the affective texture and tone of the interkinaesthetic field as a whole comes to appearance” (2008(b), p. 50).

Although Behnke’s engagement with the *interkinaesthetic field* is realised through affective states, unlike Yoga’s proposition that *Brahman* is generally ‘realised’ in deep states of contemplation,¹⁶³ both require a form of somatic focus to perceive them. In addition both are inherent and fundamentally interrelational. *Feeling* this interrelationality can lead to the discovery of the inherence of this *field* or ‘living stream present’, which Behnke depicts with her experience. She speaks of a time when she found herself suffused with affectivity, which led to her realization that she did not have to “turn toward this because I am already pervaded (or perhaps invaded) with it” (Behnke 2008(b), p. 50). Conceiving of the pre-existence of this *interrelational field* as preexistent supports an understanding of co-researchers’ growing awareness of it as the ground of themselves.

The inherent and interrelational fields of Yoga and phenomenology are illustrative of the intersubjective ground proposed by a number of transformative and contemplative theorists. These include Gunnlaugson’s (2011) ‘intersubjective field’, an aspect of his second-person or collective/group knowing; Kasl & Yorks’s (2002) ‘whole-person’ in their learning-within-relationship; Dirkx’s (1997) ‘transegoic’ state in learning, in which the individual blends with the ‘world soul’; and Ferrer, Romero and Albareda’s (2005) ‘participatory method’ in their integral transformative education.

The importance of the interrelational aspect of the ground-of-being experience for transformative, integral and contemplative education becomes clearer when considering their constructivist¹⁶⁴ foundations. John Dirkx writes that, “learning is a product of neither the individual will nor the powerful forces of sociocultural structures. Rather, learning is understood as a process that takes place within the dynamic and paradoxical relationship of self and other” (Dirkx 1997, p. 83). This is something that Casey, a yoga

¹⁶³ While there are Yogic practices that engage affective states to attain *Brahman*, such as *Bhakti Yoga* (the yoga of devotion), such practices are considered preliminary steps to deep states of contemplation that are ultimately devoid of the modes of being.

¹⁶⁴ Marie Larochelle and her colleagues (1998) define constructivism in education as an “umbrella term covering theorizations which are primarily centered on either the cognitive subject; the situated subject (or social actor); or the locus of knowledge, which...has now become the group” (p. vii).

teacher and student at Ramapo College, described from her experience of contemplative group practice, “it’s that group experience we’re all experiencing tapping into, it’s the same ‘other place’ of our minds, and that makes it more potent” (Interview, 12th November, 2009).

This relationality does not only exist in group work, for as Dirkx continues, “the ‘other’ is anything, anyone, or any group we perceive as apart or separate from our individual nature” (ibid.). It is the experience that Eunice, a yoga student in Los Angeles, described when she was alone meditating, “I did feel all of a sudden almost like a hug from the divine mother, it was really completely overwhelming” (Interview, 22nd October, 2009). It was also the ‘energy thing’ that Angelica in Los Angeles spoke of happening in her yoga classes, “it’s sometimes completely beyond my control, I just feel that everyone is in sync. And somehow I don’t think we can do that for ourselves, so to come together and do it, that makes it more powerful” (Interview, 29th October, 2009).

The importance of this interrelationality for educators starts with their recognition of the intimate ties between praxis, student, educator and their contexts. Once convinced of the ecologies inherent in the pedagogical exchange, they may choose to include practices that support contemplative interrelational experience in their pedagogy. Examples of such approaches can be found in transformative, integral and contemplative education, which each engage forms of reflective, contemplative consciousness that can lead to interrelational experience. For Gunnlaugson (2011), it is the use of co-emergent contemplative states; Kasl and York (2002) introduce the psychotherapist; John Heron calls for ‘felt connection’ through affective and imaginal modes of psyche; Dirkx’s (1997) *Soul Learning* incorporates the symbolic, imagistic and contemplative; and Ferrer et al. (2005) support intrapersonal epistemic diversity¹⁶⁵ through their integral education.

These theorist/practitioners emphasise, as I do, that contemplation is a fertile ground for pedagogy. As Agnes at LMU said about her contemplative practice, “that’s how I learn,

¹⁶⁵ Ferrer et al. (2005) propose that the student’s ‘inner’ world, which contains the, instinctive, somatic, empathic, intellectual, imaginal and contemplative ways of knowing, needs to be integrated with their ‘outer’ interpersonal epistemic diversity (p. 321).

that's how I get things into my brain" (Interview, 9th October, 2009). The experiential learning that Agnes describes was founded on the interrelational processes that she encountered in her movement between somatic-contemplative and cognitive tasks in the Yoga Psychology course at Ramapo College. This interrelationality frames much of the co-researchers' learning through contemplation and is defined in this chapter as both the form of the ground-of-being and the *feeling nexus*, and the destination of the *contemplative trajectory*. Yoga understands this interrelational ground as *Brahman* the divine transcendence that interpenetrates all reality, while phenomenology posits the *interkinaesthetic field* and the *logos* as elemental interrelational substrates. Contemplative, integral and transformative education's accounts of a foundational interrelationality, such as the intersubjective field, underpin pedagogical engagement with the holistic and intersubjective learning that can arise in their educational practices.

The feeling nexus and co-researchers' experience of the ground-of-being

This chapter concludes by highlighting features of the ground-of-being that illustrate the workings of the *feeling nexus*. As it is a subjective process, which can only directly be known by *feeling* it, this examination relies on the co-researchers' reports of its outcomes. Pertinent aspects of their ground-of-being experience, which can be understood as outcomes of the *feeling nexus* process, are presented here as empirical examples of this process of change. While the workings of the *feeling nexus* have been detailed in each of the stages of the *contemplative trajectory*, the ground-of-being experience highlights it most directly. This can be seen in the four aspects of the ground-of-being outlined in this chapter, starting with the initial experience of the ground-of-being as familiar, and simultaneously in and outside the co-researcher. This indicates the interrelational processes of the *feeling nexus* at work bridging internal and external aspects of the individual. The following layers and levels experience describes the integrating process of the *feeling nexus* that was apparent in Hannah's discovery of an assimilated 'self' inside her body. In the next stage, the co-researchers' encounter with the witness in the ground-of-being helped normalise their *feelings* of the interior and its processes, including those of the *feeling nexus*, while in their immersive experiences of the interrelationality of the ground-of-being they clearly *felt* the interweaving of the *feeling nexus*.

The first aspect is outlined in the co-researchers' initial encounters with the ground-of-being, where they became aware of its protean and ambiguous nature. They also felt that it was inherent, field-like and ubiquitous. Its bridging of the practitioner's interior and exterior space is enabled by the interrelationality of the *feeling nexus*, for like the ground-of-being it is inherent in both. This accounts for Angelina's experience detailed earlier, in which she *felt* something larger than herself that had no "personalness"...a place that it all comes together it's not just flying in all directions" (Interview, 29th October, 2009). The realisation of, and ongoing experience in this space, was so important to her that she emailed me some time after the interview to add, "I think it's the trusting in something bigger, knowing you're part of something bigger, it takes the pressure off" (ibid.). I suggest that her comments are not just analogical but the description of a fundamental interrelationality that runs through her and all existence. This would explain the way that she *felt* herself extend beyond the boundaries of her body into the 'vastness' of the ground-of-being.

The second aspect of the ground-of-being experience was the sensing or *feeling* of moving through different internal layers and levels. The force impelling this movement is understood here to be the *feeling nexus* and the heightening of the co-researchers' contemplative states, indicated by their passage through deepening layers, allowed them to *feel* it. The Yogic schema of the *kośas* or sheaths provides for this somatically bounded experience of different internal layers. This schema, the conception of different levels of consciousness, and the co-researchers' experiences of moving through deeper internal layers each rely on an interrelational force. I suggest that it is the *feeling nexus*, which works both as the drive impelling their movement through the layers and as the interweaving process that makes them permeable.

The co-researchers' discovery in contemplation of a witness is the next aspect of the ground-of-being experience. Perception of this witness indicates the presence of the *feeling nexus* in two ways, firstly, through the shared interrelational nature of the *feeling nexus* and the ground-of-being, and secondly, the similarities in their processes. Both can be understood as discreet dynamic processes arising out of the same ground, which enables their mutual interpenetration. The witness is dependent on the *feeling nexus* to provide moments of wholeness for it to inhabit, while the *feeling nexus* is, in part, engendered through the practitioner's perception of the witness. This was illustrated

earlier by Jason's description of Yoga providing him with a 'space' in which the witness could appear. He was then able to observe/*feel* his subjective experience, including, I propose, the activities of the *feeling nexus*.

The last aspect of the ground-of-being that indicates the presence of the *feeling nexus* is the interrelationality that many of the co-researchers encountered in contemplation. It is directly illustrative of the *feeling nexus* because it is the form of both the *feeling nexus* and its ground. Their shared nature and structure provides for the relations between them, which was illustrated earlier using the correspondance of the *legein* and *logos*, and *Brahman* and the cosmos. These two models emphasised the interrelational nature of the *feeling nexus* and the ground-of-being, so suggesting the way that the co-researchers' contemplative immersion in the interrelationality of both could led to *feelings* of integration, interconnection, relationality and wholeness. This study suggests that these *feelings* are pivotal in learning through contemplation as they support the reconstructed sense of unity and balance that many of the co-researchers reported.

It may appear counterintuitive to suggest that the sense of oneness, unity, peace and spaciousness that co-researchers reported was produced through an engagement with the dynamic activities of the *feeling nexus*. However, it is this vigorous process of drawing together that can lead to the ground that Angelica described as "a place where it all comes together" (Interview, 29th October, 2009). This ground is a foundational substrate in which separate elements are drawn together into a 'wholeness' that can produce balanced and peaceful states.

These aspects and outcomes of the ground-of-being illustrate the breadth of the co-researchers' contemplative experiences, though this range is dependent on the length of time they had practised, as this frequently determined the depth of the contemplative state. This in turn affected their ability to verbally reconstruct their experience. When the state of contemplation was only fleeting, it often led to the ineffability of the experience. However, it was more frequently partly 'worded' as can be seen in each of the co-researchers' stories that frame this project. Their attempts to 'word' their experiences is important both as the indicant of the *feeling nexus* and as a means to support the reintroduction of a contemplative orientation in education. In the

development of contemplative pedagogy it is critical to understand that contemplative experience is often partly ‘worded’, not ‘unwordable’, for its proposed ineffability has often left these potentially fruitful experiences marginalised in mainstream education.

This project’s development of the *feeling nexus* model aims to support pedagogical investigation of the contemplative interior. The definition of the *feeling nexus* that introduces this project supports this section’s examination of it through the co-researchers’ reports. These were detailed through their early experiences of finding themselves beyond the boundaries of their bodies, and of travelling through internal layers to the ground-of-being, which led to the development of *feeling languages* and *maps*. These initial encounters with the ground-of-being integrated the changes in meaning that the co-researchers were experiencing, as did their engagement with a witness consciousness. Each of these pre-predicative aspects of learning through contemplation underpin the cognitive meaning that can result. This section’s examination of these aspects of the *feeling nexus* at work in the ground-of-being illustrates its integrative force. The sense of reintegration, relationality, balance and wholeness that results from contemplative encounters with this force is, I propose, what actuates learning through contemplation.

In summary

The co-researchers’ *feeling* of deepening internal senses in the *contemplative trajectory* enhanced their experiences of affectivity, while their altered sense of time and space indicated an engagement in what Heron (1992) terms a “compresence with... [the]...world” (p. 77). This merging or integration is possible if this ‘world’ is founded on an elemental ground-of-being consisting of interpenetrating systems and processes of interrelationality, such as the *feeling nexus*. It appeared from the co-researchers’ reports that this was indeed what they discovered as they progressed in their contemplative practices. Many described encountering a ground-of-being that paradoxically was in and outside them, which on entering they recognised as a place that they already knew. If the co-researchers’ contemplative practices continued, this disorienting experience resolved through deepening immersion in the interrelational layers of this space until they reached an integrated calm centre.

These transformations started incrementally in the *contemplative trajectory* and were completed as the co-researchers arrived at the ground-of-being, where they were able to experience a sense of balance. This process of change and learning through contemplation is founded on the practitioner's experience of themselves as part of the ecological field or ground-of-being. Their contemplative immersion in this ecological field, which can be understood as a type of entrainment, leads to their *feeling* of themselves as interrelational. This new *sense* of themselves, which I believe is guided by the force and processes of the *feeling nexus*, grounds learning through contemplation.

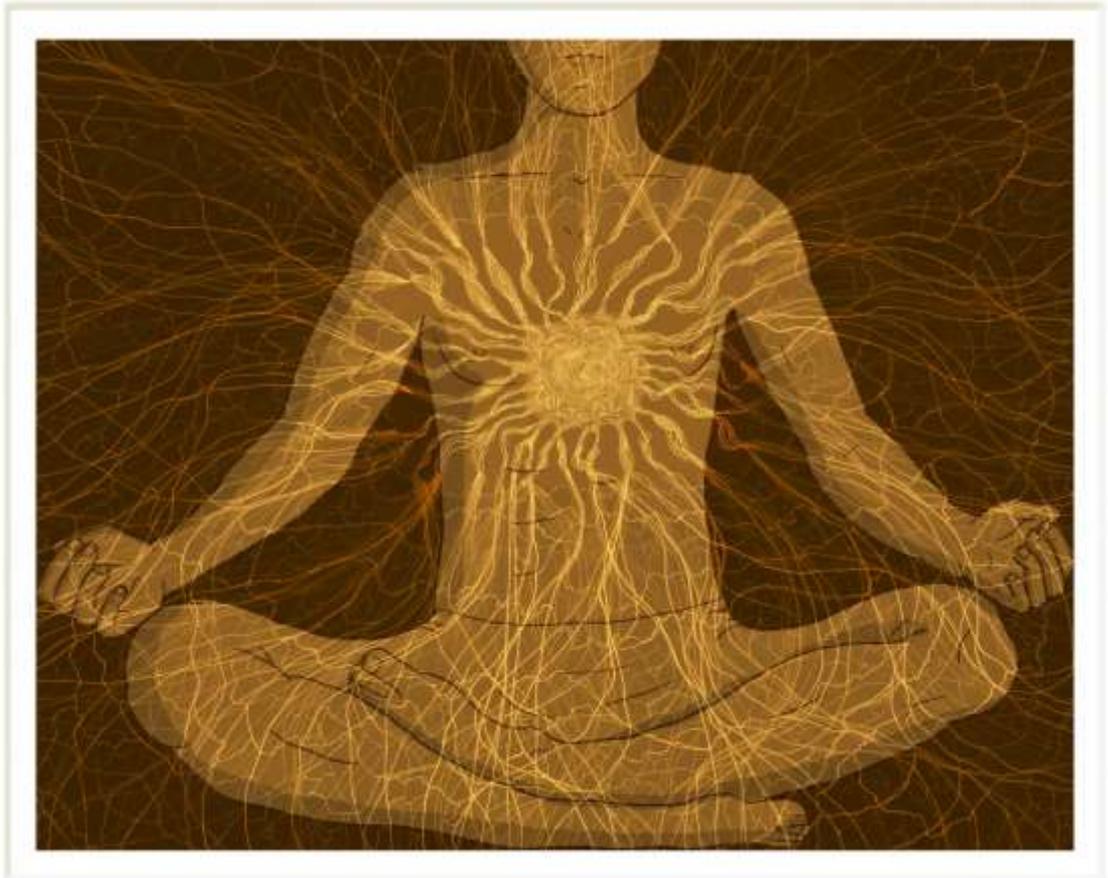
Apart from the obvious advantages of working with students who feel peaceful, balanced and integrated, it is important when designing contemplative pedagogy to understand that it is framed by the interrelationality of these balanced states. This outcome highlights the need to address the intersubjective construction of knowledge, its dependence on the educators 'presence' in the classroom and the ethics of intersubjectivity in education. Educators who do this are accounting for the scope, subtly, complexity and intensity of the contemplative state of consciousness, and the processes at work in the internal 'places' that their students may enter.

Each stage of the ground-of-being experience revealed significant aspects for contemplative pedagogy, starting with the co-researchers' sense of moving through its different layers and levels, which indicates the depth of focus and ecological forces at play in contemplation. Their encounter with a witness consciousness evidenced the metacognition that can develop through contemplation, while their growing sense of an interrelationality in the ground-of-being is a reminder for contemplative educators that learning takes place in the relations between student, teacher, pedagogy and context. These features of the ground-of-being experience are useful for the creation of contemplative pedagogy and further support calls for the integration of the contemplative in education.

This analysis of the ground-of-being experience concludes this project's first section, which critically examined the *contemplative trajectory*. The following three chapters, which comprise the second section, investigate the three-part process of *learning feelings* that occurred throughout the trajectory. The first stage of pre-predicative and

embodied learning is the focus of the following chapter, while an intermediary stage where the co-researchers moved between pre-predicative, somatic and cognitive meaning making is considered in Chapter Seven. Lastly, Chapter Eight investigates the final, most directly cognitive stage of *learning feelings*.

Chapter Six: *Learning Feelings*: Learning in Pre-predicative and Somatic Stages



Cameron Beau Wylie Foster, 2013

Well basically I was in a sympathetic storm at that point, the sympathetic neuro-system was just overloaded, I was like hyper-alert and the class allowed me to calm down a bit. I was able to see things in perspective, calm down, and think about something else. I think following the kind of ‘Simon-Says’ sort of yoga – you know lift your arms, press your inner hand down...what do you mean ‘your inner hand?’ I’ve never thought about my inner hand, a hand’s a hand, you know? So that was interesting to me and got my mind off the studying, and in a very efficient dosing. I mean I could have gone surfing or I could have gone for a walk but this seemed like it really got me right into being present, you know, without mucking around with a lot of other things. (Interview with Jason, 11th October, 2009)

In Jason’s description of his first experience of yoga he outlines the intense contemplative somatic focus that can initiate a form of bodily learning. This somatic knowing plus the pre-predicative experience that underpins it are stages of learning that Jason and other co-researchers experienced through contemplation. These two linked phases of the *learning feelings* process, which can occur in the *contemplative trajectory*, are the first stage of a three-tier process that the co-researchers outlined. Their experiences of pre-predicative and somatic *feelings* were followed by an intermediary stage in which they moved between pre-figurative and somatic, and somatic and cognitive meaning making. At this point the co-researchers explored their *feelings* through the expanding inner awareness that developed as their contemplative practices became more regular. It was here they started to cognitively structure the pre-figurative experiences by assigning them somatic meaning. In this stage, between the pre-predicative and cognitive, they began to *learn* or become familiar with these *feelings*, and use them to navigate their interior landscapes. The final stage, which is described in Chapter Eight, involves the co-researchers’ cognitive engagement with their contemplative pre-figurative and bodily experience, in which they integrated the new meanings that can arise from these experiences into their daily lives. Similar to the stages of the *contemplative trajectory*, the co-researchers did not always experience the phases of *learning feelings* as outlined here. However, there were enough commonalities in their reports to propose the *learning feelings* process.

This chapter examines the way that pre-predicative *feelings*, framed by somatic awareness, can be experienced in contemplation, and how they are an important aspect of the foundations of learning. It also illuminates subtle, internal tidal zones that students can enter in contemplation where the pre-figurative, somatic and cognitive merge. It does this to outline the importance for educators of meeting students in bodies that know the sensitivity of these boundary states. It also foregrounds the need for pedagogical space that supports the fragility of the new meanings that can arise as students emerge from and cross into different states of consciousness.

Linking this and the following two chapters through an extended discussion of the *learning feelings* process not only provides a comprehensive account of the co-researchers' integration of their contemplative experience, but it further scaffolds the *feeling nexus* hypothesis. It does this by highlighting aspects of *learning feelings* relevant to the *feeling nexus* as they appear in this analysis. The examination of pre-figurative and somatic experience and learning supports both this study's critique of the emphasis in mainstream education on the cognitive and rational, and its proposition that the current re-emergence of contemplative education is beneficial for the individuals and institutions that engage it.

The focus in this chapter on the co-researchers' pre-predicative and somatic learning is underpinned by the rich data that this study's phenomenological method produced. It revealed the important phenomenon of the co-researchers' trajectory through their interior realms which was described in the previous three chapters. By following their passage through the contemplative interior, I realised that the co-researchers developed idiosyncratic *feeling languages, maps and meanings* to navigate it. Although these are unique to each individual, elements of them can be generalised to learning in contemplation. This starts with the understanding that the co-researchers learnt through pre-figurative stages, which began as they returned to their bodies through contemplation.

This chapter follows the co-researchers as they come to their 'senses' and traces the stress release that resulted. It may appear that this is a return to concepts from earlier chapters related to the permeable body, though the focus in this chapter is on physiological outcomes. In particular this chapter asks why a contemplative return to

the body can reduce stress and produce other such positive outcomes. In answering this, it introduces neuroscience findings and the state of ‘physiological coherence’ from psychological research, in which heart-brain synchronisation supports cognitive function. These physiological benefits appear to result from the increased pre-predicative and somatic awareness that forms a part of the *learning feelings* process. This project suggests that the drawing-together process of the *feeling nexus* underpins this *learning*. Supporting these propositions is the understanding of a permeable body, which is introduced through the yogic breath practice of *prāṇāyāma*. This practice introduces the ecological model of the body-mind, and the concept of the interrelational force of the *feeling nexus* underpinning permeable forms of the modes of being. The chapter concludes with neurophysiological findings that outline a possible physiological substrate illustrating the *feeling nexus* process, which is said here to found the benefits of contemplation.

Pre-predicative and somatic experience and the ineffable in education

The schema of *learning feelings*, developed in this and the following two chapters relies on an elemental pre-conceptual foundation of learning. My emphasis on this ground, my development of the *feeling nexus* process embedded in it and the understanding of the *felt meanings* that can arise from engaging with it potentially introduces a new focus in contemplative education theory. This is not to say that these aspects are ignored in the field – educational theorists Peter Grossenbacher and Steven Parkin (2006) speak of ‘nonconceptual experience’ and its relation to embodied learning. In doing this they allude to the intersection of the modes of being that can be *felt* in contemplation, suggesting that contemplative practice leads to nonconceptual experience, including “sensations, thoughts, emotions, and everything” (Grossenbacher & Parkin 2006, p. 5). They also outline a learning sequence consisting of four phases, which are study, contemplation, meditation and action. This sequence has some similarity to the three-tier model of *learning feelings*. However, they stress the importance of sensation without directly examining the interplay between the pre-predicative and cognitive aspects interfacing the senses. Also they do not collate the aspects of bodily learning like the sequence outlined in this chapter, or place the same emphasis on the pre-figurative aspects of learning.

Educational theorists Robert Waxler and Maureen Hall (2011) critique, as I do, the focus in mainstream education on ‘cognitive activity’ in their call for the introduction of the “wisdom of embodied knowledge” (p. 99). They correlate bodily knowing with affectivity, and suggest that to establish a pedagogical space in which feeling and learning can be integrated, teachers need to develop a connection between the affective and cognitive. However, by superimposing affectivity over embodiment they may inadvertently overlook the more expansive understanding of *feeling* and somatic awareness that supports this project’s definition of the *learning feelings* process.

In her critique of modes of teaching that fail to treat the learner as an embodied subject, Roxana Ng (2008) outlines the need for pedagogy that acknowledges the integration of mind, body and spirit in knowledge construction. She argues, as I do, that “Western liberal and critical education is built on a profound division: The privileging of the mind-intellect over the body-spirit” (Ng 2008, p. 1). Ng calls for a form of ‘decolonised’ embodied learning that moves beyond the mind-body division (2008, p. 8). She does this through her introduction of Chinese medicine’s understanding of the body. This is a body that does not have distinct parts and components, rather, it is conceptualised in terms of energy (*Qi*) flow. Ng believes that this energetic body provides an alternative understanding of the body that ably challenges the mind-body dichotomy present in much mainstream education.

Ng draws from her empirical research in which she studied both her students’ and her own *Qi Gong* practice to emphasise, as I do, the importance of being a practitioner researcher. She believes that experiences of the non-dual energy body, which can result from *Qi Gong*, not only enhance critical reasoning, but they can assist the practitioner to “see dispassionately and to alter actions that contribute to the reproduction of dominate-subordinate relations” (Ng 2008, p.9). Unlike Waxler & Hall and this study, Ng fails to include the affective dimension in her analysis, though she does acknowledge the importance of engaging the ‘whole’ student in education. She also emphasises the role that contemplative practice can play in facilitating ‘whole student’ engagement. However, her focus on the dynamics of power implicit in the mind-body dichotomy in education means that the pre-predicative aspects of learning are neglected.

This sketch of the work of Ng, Waxler and Hall, and Grossenbacher and Parkin provides a sample of contemplative education theorists' engagement with the pre-predicative. While it is not fully representative of the field, their calls to include subjective and pre-figurative states of consciousness in education can be generalised to much contemplative education. However, unlike this project, they do not directly address the elemental processes at work in the contemplative interior.

The pre-predicative and learning

I think the meditation definitely is relaxing and it kind of centres me, I want to say, in who I truly am. It also makes me more open to learning in different ways that I might have been opposed to in the past - would have rejected as, oh no that's bullshit, give me the scientific data, you know? Because now I can feel the changes in me but it's very subtle and yeh it's tricky, I don't necessarily know how to talk about it. (Interview with Agnes, 9th October, 2009)

Agnes speaks here of the way that learning started for her in a pre-predicative realm that was hard to explain. In attempting to do so she described this tacit knowing (Polanyi 2009/1966) or the 'experience of rationality' (Merleau-Ponty in Moran 2002) as a 'feeling thing', and a 'vibration' that was on another level. Agnes related this 'feeling' experience to the way she preferred experiential learning, saying:

...so when you do the experiential stuff that helps you learn somehow? Its different than if somebody's talking to you or you're just reading something? There's so much material that I read and I'm bombarded with information, but to really experience that information in a way that I can take it home with me, so to speak, I need to experience it. (Interview, 9th October, 2009)

This was reiterated by Angelica in Los Angeles who spoke of the experiential aspect of her yoga practice leading to "certain feelings that you might not have had before, so in a sense you can't put them into words, but you know them when you have them again" (Interview, 29th October, 2009). I believe the 'feelings' that both Angelica and Agnes describe are a level of pre-figurative experience that underpins and interweaves the somatic and cognitive. However, its interpenetration of the somatic and the cognitive

means that it is difficult for practitioners to differentiate each of these aspects of *learning feelings*. This is why Agnes and many of the other co-researchers used bodily or sensory metaphors to describe this part of their contemplative experience. It appeared that the intermeshing of the pre-predicative and somatic, the co-researchers' use of bodily metaphor, their frequent preference for experiential learning and the way that their bodies was often the entry point to the pre-figurative made it difficult for them to translate this aspect of learning through contemplation. Nonetheless I emphasise, as I have elsewhere, that this does not mean contemplative pre-predicative experience is ineffable, though what is required is the development or reworking of an appropriate language.

In his examination of pre-ontological contemplative experience, James Morley (2009) suggests that a poetic approach can facilitate an understanding of the pre-predicative. However, he emphasises that non-dual experience in contemplation is needed to direct the development of such a language:

There are experiences we have that are pre-linguistic, just as Merleau-Ponty writes that there are pre-ontological experiences. For before we construct the world cognitively, we have these experiences. William James calls them 'pure experience', and Husserl *ordoic posi* the 'fundamental belief' that is prior to the world itself...While these experiences are pre-intellectual, pre-cognitive, we don't use the language of unconscious because it's not 'un'. Freud speaks of unconsciousness or conscious, but that's a poor description. It's more that there are phases and dimensions and levels and strata to consciousness...Poets get at this, they point to these experiences through poetry but we need more than that. And this is where yoga comes in, it says, 'Here are some techniques. Follow these techniques and you can experience it yourself'...Despite the dominance of the rational there's this other dimension, which is more of a horizontal kind of experience that we're already in but we don't know we are...We've become so dependent on this vertical rational consciousness that we're kind of frightened of the horizontal. The purpose of contemplation is to lose this fear and be equally at home. To have the two in sync with one another, in Gestalt language it's 'figure and ground', you know like 'part and whole', in a 'symbiotic coherent unity'. (Interview, 19th November, 2009)

Re-engaging the body: Learning through the body

The rest of this chapter focuses on the somatic aspect of *learning feelings*, though it is important to remember that the pre-predicative is interwoven through these experiences. The initial stress release and increased ability to focus that resulted from heightened somatic awareness in contemplation led some co-researchers to realise that they learnt through their bodies. This started with their immersion in an elemental substrate containing the *feeling nexus*. The co-researchers attempted to describe it through a repertoire of pre-figurative *feelings* and *meanings* that then resolved into somatic and cognitive expression. Casey, a student at Ramapo College, alluded to this process in her description of the way she learnt through yoga, when she said, “going into your body helps you stay in your mind” (Interview, 12th November, 2009).

In her description of the way that she learnt through her body, Agnes outlined an understanding of bodily learning based on the permeability or interrelationality of the body. In answering my question about her practice she said, “Oh, I don’t have my shoulders way up here anymore [she mimed her shoulders tight up around her ears]...clear thinking, no agenda, it almost feels like it’s just coming through me, rather than being my own thoughts” (Interview, 9th October, 2009). Her description of becoming permeable with ‘knowing’ flowing through her illustrates, I suggest, her immersion in a primordial substrate both of and beyond her. This project understands it to be the ecological ground containing the *feeling nexus*, which can be accessed through contemplation.

My proposition of the pre-predicative, embodied and cognitive stages of *learning feelings* differentiates this project’s approach from that of a number of other contemplative education theorists. Although they acknowledge the importance of the somatic or sensory experience common in contemplation, their focus often remains on the examination of sensory function rather than the pre-predicative experience that underpins it. Susan Burggraf and Peter Grossenbacher’s (2007) description of a Psychology of Perception course that had a contemplative orientation outlines this emphasis on the senses. They suggest that “rather than the sometimes impersonal approach that many learners experience in science education, this contemplative investigation allows greater personal involvement in the study of sensory function”

(Burggraf & Grossenbacher 2007, p. 5). They stress that deep somatic experience offers students empirical insight into the theoretical underpinnings of psychology. While Burggraf and Grossenbacher describe a form of learning through the body, their focus on the outcomes of contemplative education is different from the emphasis applied here. This project stresses the foundation of these outcomes, which is understood to be an elemental, ecological substrate containing the *feeling nexus*.

Contemplative synaesthesia and learning

I initially became aware of this ground of bodily learning through the co-researchers' reports, in which they described a range of interrelational experiences that arose in contemplative states of heightened somatic awareness. They described entering interrelational spaces and *feeling* interweaving processes. I have termed experience of these processes – which I suggest are the drawing-together actions of the *feeling nexus* – *contemplative synaesthesia*. The following overview of this experience is introduced by a similar process which neuroscientist Catherine Kerr and her colleagues term “somatic re-perception” (Kerr et al. 2011(b), p. 90). They identified this somatic form of meta-awareness, in which modes of being are sensed as interwoven, through their analysis of an eight-week Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) course. Part of their analysis focuses on their participants' reports, which were recorded in regular diary entries. In a section from one of these diaries, the participant describes somatic re-perception or *contemplative synaesthesia*, detailing “emotions of anger in [my] pelvic area, happiness in stomach, and sadness to the point of crying in my hands” (ibid.). Angelina in Los Angeles spoke of something similar from an early experience in her yoga training in India, which she said she felt “like my heart was going to fall out” (Interview, 29th October, 2009).

Angelina's experience, which resulted from the contemplative re-engagement with her body, was similar for a number of the co-researchers. It frequently led to deeper states of somatic awareness in which, I propose, they began to *feel* the *feeling nexus*. These *feelings* or *contemplative synaesthesia* are, as suggested above, similar to Kerr et al.'s somatic re-perception, or the “complex blends of affective and somatic descriptions that [are] difficult to decode” (2011(b), p. 90). It is also unclear why the co-researchers'

engagement with the *feeling nexus* began in their body, though Kerr and her colleagues may provide an answer:

While, somatic, cognitive and emotional processes were present in all of the diaries, somatic processes were fundamental to the diary entries in a majority of the participants across the trial. It seems as though participants found the task of developing an observing perspective easier to carry out when focused on somatic sensations, perhaps because the body feelings that they focused on were so concrete and tangible. (ibid.)

The palpability of bodily sensation might indeed be why the new meanings that the co-researchers made of their initial contemplative experiences were framed by their bodies.

As the co-researchers' experience of the gestalts created by the *feeling nexus* grew through their reunion with their bodies, they began to understand that they learnt through their bodies. In her description of the Yoga Psychology course at Ramapo College, Casey spoke of the embodied practices 'putting the information' into her:

I think that when you spend the first hour, or hour and a half of the three-hour class in a lecture, and then you get on the mat and you physically engage, you know with the *prāṇāyāma*, the breathing, and the *āsana*, it just kind of puts it into you – more than just your mind. You're really internalising it, it's easier to remember because you're actually doing it...you're moving your body kinaesthetically along with your mind mentally. (Interview, 12th November, 2009)

She also spoke of the deepening somatic focus drawing the cognitive through her body, saying "we'd do the philosophy, then as you do the body movements it's in there and it's going through you – it's really getting engrained" (ibid.).

Casey's description of her mind or thoughts penetrating her body and of her body being ingrained with knowledge subverts a common understanding in education of the body and the mind being separate entities, with the mind or cognitive faculty the primary agent in cognition. This understanding of the reasoning mind and the mute body is

often depicted as a Cartesian dualism, which Drew Leder (1990) describes as an ontological presumption that has encouraged the ‘absence of the body’. The gap left by this absence has been filled by the mind, which has meant that “[c]ertain ontological presumptions are encouraged by the body’s styles of absence: for example, the existence of the reasoning mind as a separate, immaterial order of being” (Leder 1990, p. 149). Leder proposes that the body and mind need to be conceptualised as a composite of “intertwined aspects of one living organism” (ibid.). This interrelational conception of bodily being is similar to the understanding of the ecological body detailed in Chapter Two. In that chapter, and throughout this project, the body is said to be permeable because of an inherent ecology, defined through Merleau-Ponty’s *flesh* ontology, *Brahman* and the *gunas* in Yoga, and exemplified by the processes of the *feeling nexus*.

The ecology of the body is mirrored by permeable forms of the modes of being, which are detailed throughout this study. Their permeability highlights the liminality of expanded bodily awareness, because they are seen as states in which the practitioner moves between worlds or levels of consciousness. Experience of these permeable modes of being in deep somatic focus can mean the new understandings that develop between these states may only be partially formed. Supporting the tenuous nature of these new meanings requires a certain level of sensitivity on the part of the contemplative educator. Jason’s story, which follows, provides insight into the refinement of somatic focus that contemplative education students can develop. In describing his experience of the balancing *āsanas* (poses), Jason reveals the intersection of the somatic, cognitive, affective and intersubjective, and by association the presence of the *feeling nexus*:

I remember realising that with one of the balancing poses, it’s like such an obvious correlation of this idea of living in balance and doing a balancing pose and you see it so directly. Like one day you can do it reasonably well, you can stand there for a long time, and another day you keep wobbling or can’t hold the balance and you think, ‘Wow, I’m really out of balance.’ When I first thought about the correspondence between the pose and how I was feeling, that’s when it occurred to me. Yeh, it’s just like if I can have some experience of physical balance, which is probably physical, mental, emotional balance then I can kind

of take that experience into myself. Then I can have some kind of inner memory of what that physical thing felt like, and then I can come back to it. So when I'm out of balance, like in a social situation or something, I can remember this feeling of 'balance' I had inside of myself, and I can transfer it to that social situation, you know? (Interview, 11th October, 2009)

Returning the body to education: Kinaesthetic knowing

Jason's *feeling* of balance, retrieval of it and then conscious application of the *felt meaning* to other situations is a good example of *learning feelings*. It highlights the *felt meaning* he developed and the way that his mapping of the interior with these *feelings* moved through pre-predicative and somatic stages to the cognitive where these *feelings* were assimilated into his daily life. Jason's experiences counter approaches to learning that are led by cognition, such as those outlined by Richard Mayer, who states that "meaningful learning outcomes depend on the learner engaging in active cognitive processing during learning including attending to relevant incoming information, mentally organizing it into coherent cognitive representations, and integrating the representations with each other" (Mayer 2011, p. 82). This is not to say that cognition plays a limited role in learning, far from it, but the co-researchers' reports suggest that contemplation in education starts in the pre-predicative, moves through the body and then enters cognition.

Pedagogical approaches that engage the somatic stages of *learning feelings* are variously labelled somatic, embodied and kinaesthetic learning.¹⁶⁶ As embodied learning and embodied knowledge are topics being investigated in a variety of disciplines, there are conflicting understandings of the term. However, Tammy Freiler's definition is useful, because it points to the lived somatic experience that underpins most definitions, she states that embodied knowledge is a "way to construct knowledge through direct engagement in bodily experiences and inhabiting one's body through a felt sense of being-in-the-world" (2008, p. 40). This definition provides a starting point for the wide range of theoretical propositions related to bodily being and learning.

¹⁶⁶ Kinaesthetic and embodied knowing and learning are also frequently acknowledged and engaged in contemplative, transformative and integral education.

Sociology and feminist studies are two predominant fields that to varying degrees view the body as a social construction rather than a biological phenomenon. They understand knowledge to be situated, or 'located', and thus grounded in the context in which it resides. It is in this way that the body in sociology is said to be socially moulded by the discourses, practices and institutions that engage it. The body, for some feminists working in the area, is understood as the corporeal space in which gendered acts are directly inscribed on it. As the feminist theorist Judith Butler famously claimed, the body has no natural determining characteristics but that "various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts there would be no gender at all" (Butler in Chapman, 1998, p. 2). In both Feminist studies and Sociology it is often the surface of the body that is seen to be sculpted by social, political, cultural and economic norms. Although its interiority may be presumed and in that sense acknowledged by these approaches, it is generally overlooked because of the focus on the outer social shaping of the body.

This project acknowledges the perspectives that privilege the social construction of the body, but suggests that there is a pre-predicative interrelational region of bodily being and knowing, of equal importance. Michael Polanyi (2009/1966) terms this 'tacit knowing' and suggests that meaning making is underpinned by the tacit knowing that results from the interactions of our bodies in the world – something that Clark (2001) describes as cognition being led by the body. Rationalist approaches to education have generally ignored the ways in which the body can 'lead' learning, because their focus has been on the cognitive assimilation of knowledge. This emphasis has resulted in the assumption that learning resides in the act of reflection rather than the initial experience. However, as Clark and Polanyi propose, our cognitive processes are always catching up to the initial bodily (and pre-predicative) learning. For while we may not feel the internal processes of the body that precede cognition, they emphasise that there is a bodily root to all thought (Polanyi 2009, p. 15).

A further challenge to the socially constructed body comes from a group of feminist scholars who are currently disputing the limited agency of the body in some areas of feminist theory. Robin Barnacle (2009) is one of the theorists whose critique of rationalism in educational discourse highlights the exclusion of the biological in favour of the cultural construction of the body in some areas of feminist inquiry into

embodiment. She introduces Elizabeth Wilson's work, which counters the one-sidedness that has "dominated Western thinking since Descartes, where thought and the symbolic are treated as reigning over the biological and material" (Barnacle 2009, p. 24). Wilson focuses on Freud's influence on feminist thought and, in particular, his exclusion of the neurological from early clinical research. She suggests that this has in part led to an overemphasis on the psychological and cultural in the feminist theory drawing from Freud, which she is working to remedy through her engagement with neurobiological data. In summing up her work, Wilson states that, "exploring the entanglement of biochemistry, affectivity, and the physiology of the internal organs will provide us with new avenues into the body" (Wilson in Barnacle 2009, p. 24).

Wilson, Barnacle and others who are examining this ecological conception of the body propose that the hierarchal placement of psyche above soma should be substituted for a heterarchy in which a process of equal exchange between the modes of being supports their mutual development. These theorists' accounts of the mind-body complex are important here because they support the call for the inclusion of somatic knowing in education, while Wilson's envisioning of the 'entanglement' of physiological processes also provides a model of intertwining illustrative of the *feeling nexus* process.

Coming to our senses

Somatic knowing in learning and expanded somatic awareness in contemplation are emphasised here because they are, I suggest, what enabled the co-researchers to *feel* their ecologies and those they intersect. As they became familiar with or *learnt* these interrelational processes, including I suggest the *feeling nexus*, they began to understand their bodies as a touch stone – a somatic state/space they could return to where they were able to reference previously unknown *feelings*. The development of this somatic awareness supported their growing familiarity with and trust of the interior and the *felt meanings* they used to understand it.

This aspect of bodily learning was described by Michael Franklin and his colleagues (2011) in their examination of the bodily trust that transpersonal artists develop through their practices. Franklin et al. (2011) relate these artists' descriptions of a form of

mindfulness or contemplation¹⁶⁷ that occurs in the deep focus of art-making. They claim that this results in the artist's cultivation of "an openness to receiving teachings from the image as well as their art process" (Franklin 2011, p. 105). This intersubjective relationship between the artist and their work results in them 'opening' to the imaginal, which Franklin et al. describe as an expansive space where the artist "learns to trust their bodies" (ibid.). The trust of their bodies, which develops in this relationship, can then lead to somatic learning. While Franklin et al.'s development of an interrelational exchange in reflective states is similar to contemplative relational experience in this project, their proposition of the imaginal as the foundational ground for creative practice differs from this project's suggestion of an elemental ecological substrate and processes that ground learning in contemplation. Experience of this ground and the *feeling nexus* that resides in it is, I suggest, what actuates the positive outcomes of contemplation that the co-researchers reported. This happens through a form of entrainment in which the co-researchers' experience of the drawing-together process of the *feeling nexus* initiates a similar gathering together of the disparate aspects of themselves. The sense of wholeness that can result is, I believe, what founds learning through contemplation.

James Morley described the importance of the embodied aspect of this learning process when I asked him why his Psychology of Yoga course produced the positive outcomes that his students told me about. He said it works because the yoga in his course "restores them to their senses, their sensibility, their common sense...they know it's good, that's the thing. They know it's good, they don't know what it is, but it makes them feel better. It makes them **feel**" (Interview, 8th November, 2009). He told me that while some of his students initially resist this form of pedagogy, as many have not practised yoga before, it is not long before they begin to report lowered stress levels, an increased ability to focus and a greater sense of wellbeing.

The reasons for this are complex and are discussed in this chapter and throughout the project, though Morley provides the most direct answer above. He is suggesting that his course requires students to engage deeply with themselves through their senses. In this way they are able to *feel* themselves, and in doing so *feel* gestalts of their somatic, cognitive, affective and transcendent selves. By connecting with these *feelings* they can

¹⁶⁷ Franklin and his colleagues term this "mixing mind with space" (2011, p. 5).

then experience the consolidation of fragmented aspects of themselves, and in this more balanced state they are able to engage more of themselves in their learning. The importance of these findings for education can be seen directly in a regularly recurring phenomenon in Morley's Yoga Psychology class, which he outlined in our interview:

I keep encountering it as I teach this course year after year – the students who practice well, who join their breath and movement and are clearly present and focused, whose eyes are not wandering, who don't slouch, these students are the ones that get the best grades. They do the best academic work, so focus in the practice session is absolutely correlated with the quality of their academic writing, and the comprehension that they achieve. (Interview, 8th November, 2009)

Morley questioned why this was so and spoke of conducting research into the relationship between students' progress in yoga and their improved grades. However, reasons for this correlation of the contemplative practices and academic performance are suggested in the co-researchers' accounts of their contemplative experiences, which are detailed here and throughout the project. This chapter now focuses on physiological responses to meditation. Using the co-researchers' reports of their embodied experience and neurophysiological research, it examines neurological substrates underpinning the positive impacts of contemplation.

Somatic re-entry, stress release and focus

I was literally able to feel my breath go in my nose and down to my stomach and then I felt my stomach exhale and my breath come all the way out, and then during the practice I felt my mood change. (Interview with Agnes, 9th October, 2009)

This excerpt from Agnes's story of an early meditation experience outlines the refinement of focus in the heightened somatic awareness of contemplation that was common for many of the co-researchers. Although it required all of them to deepen their contemplative focus, and while the co-researchers experienced contemplative somatic awareness differently, the awareness that grew from contemplative re-entry of

the body was an important phase in learning through contemplation. These initial embodied contemplative experiences often resulted in the stress relief that supports other positive outcomes such as heightened metacognition and equanimity, and the increased ability to focus, retain and retrieve information.

The contemplative pedagogues that I spoke to alluded to these benefits when they reiterated the need for contemplative education. They reinforced what I was told by the co-researchers and what is emphasised in the literature, which is the pressing issue of chronic stress that an increasing number of students and academics are experiencing (Abouserie 1994; Andrews 2004; Humphrey & McCarthy 1998; Reisberg 2000; Robotham & Julian 2006). Much of what these theorists propose hinges on findings similar to those of a 2009 poll of 2200 students across 40 colleges in the USA. It examined the stress and mental health of the students and found that 85 per cent reported feeling stressed on a daily basis (MTVU Associated Press 2009, p. 1).

Contemplative education, which has in part developed in response to this issue, was aptly termed an ‘antidote’ by Jason when he spoke of his yoga practice. He said, “Well on one level it’s basically the antidote to the cumulative stress, cumulative toxins, bad messages and you know the greed, anger and delusion that is out there” (Interview, 11th October, 2009). Contemplative educator Tobin Hart (2008) also speaks of contemplative practices as a counterbalance to the exponential growth of stress and stress-related diseases¹⁶⁸ which are currently impacting many aspects of contemporary Western life, including education. Hart and others are concerned about the large number of students, teachers and parents who are suffering from time poverty and chronic over-stimulation.

Physical responses to high levels of stress can be seen in the current increase of stress related diseases that are underpinned by overstimulation of the hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenal axis (HPA), which coordinates the fight-flight response (Also see Ader 2007; Arnold 1990; Fink 2000; Humphrey 2004; Vaspe 1999; White 2009). Some of the

¹⁶⁸ The *Australian Master OHS and Environment Guide* reports that stress costs approximately \$1.3 billion per year in Australia, with claims for stress-related health issues having increased fourfold over the past decade (CCH Australia Limited, 2007, p. 320). Hart (2008) suggests that stress is implicated in the top six causes of death in North America, with suicide, the third leading cause of death for 10-14 year olds, and homicide and suicide respectively, the second and third leading causes of death in 15-24 year olds (p. 245).

diseases connected to the hyper-arousal of the HPA axis and elevated levels of cortisol are “Obesity, memory deficit, even the neurobiology of suicide...Chronic stress or corticosterone treatment induces pathological alterations, such as dendritic atrophy in hippocampal neurons...which are paralleled by cognitive deficits” (Hart 2008, p. 246).

Psychoneuroendocrinology suggests that meditation can reverse these biochemical changes. Christopher MacLean and his colleague’s (1997) in their work with subjects practising Transcendental Meditation (TM) found that their basal cortisol levels and average cortisol across the meditation session decreased from pre- to post-test. This is significant, as cortisol is a steroid hormone released in response to stress. Neuroscience and meditation research also suggests that meditation can alleviate the negative effects of stress by working positively with the plasticity of the prefrontal activation asymmetries of the brain. According to Richard Davidson and his colleagues (2000), this part of the brain can be ‘trained’ by meditation. In their research, Davidson et al. (2003) found significant increases in left-sided anterior activation of the brain, which is associated with reductions in stress, anxiety, negative affect and increases in positive affect (p. 569).

Many of the co-researchers I interviewed described the way that their contemplative practices reduced their stress levels. Casey, a student in James Morely’s Yoga Psychology class, spoke of the way her yoga practice did this. She said, “I can be a little hyper and lose track of my centre and my calmness, that’s why yoga is so good for me, that’s why the meditation has to be a habit for me to, yeh to keep me on track” (Interview, 12th November, 2009). An associated aspect of the stress reduction the co-researchers described was an increased ability to focus. Cadin, another student in Morley’s class, said “it definitely helps me focus, if I get writers block I can just do a little practice and it gets me refocused on what I was doing” (Interview, 13th November, 2009).

Sharon, a student in Katherine Harper’s Zen Art course at LMU, spoke of both the relaxation and focus that resulted from her meditation practice, “Yeh, so I just try to deal with all the chaos going on everywhere, it kinda seems to help and calm my mind, and yeh, it enables me to focus on other things because I’m relaxed” (Interview, 16th November, 2009). Eamon, a Yoga Philosophy student at Ramapo, described his

increased ability to focus after yoga, “the main thing that I really focus on is doing the *āsanas* and I find that, like after doing a couple of exercises and stuff, I just feel more focused, and I feel like I can just get more into the topics” (Interview, 9th December, 2009). Roger, an author, yoga teacher, and practitioner in Los Angeles, described the stress release and equanimity that his students reported:

They say ‘I feel calm for the first time ever’, ‘I’m less stressed’, ‘I think more clearly’, ‘I don’t lose my temper as much’. But to me, the most consistent thing was what in the *Bhagavad Gīta* they talk about as having equanimity in pleasure and pain, and loss and gain. That quality of equanimity, of steadiness, of inner calm and stability, no matter what’s going on – having the ability to rebound from tough events and regain your equilibrium, that’s what you hear most over time (Interview, 15th October, 2009).

The equilibrium and balance that Roger and other co-researchers reported appears to suggest a drawing together of fragmented aspects of themselves. This results, I believe, from their pre-predicative and somatic engagement with processes of the interior, including the *feeling nexus*. I am also proposing that this reintegration of the self through contemplation can ameliorate what a number of contemplative educators describe as the alienating and fragmenting experience of mainstream education. In her comparison of contemplative education and education founded on the modernist tradition, contemplative educator Mirabai Bush states that mainstream education provides a “fragmented way of learning and teaching, dualistic alienation of body from mind, emotion from intellect, humans from nature and art from science, whereas the basis of contemplative understanding is wholeness, unity, integration” (2006, p. 1723). The pedagogical significance of the balanced and integrated states that can result from meditation is illustrated in the co-researchers’ reports and the propositions of Bush and others outlined in this chapter.

An example of somatic learning

The Yogic practice of *prāṇāyāma*¹⁶⁹ (breath control) provides an illustration of the stress relief and sense of balance and equanimity provided by contemplation, for it affords experiences of the interweaving of the body-mind. In his answer to my question about how Yoga works, Christopher Chapple at LMU said, “it’s the centrality of the breath” (Interview, 10th October, 2009). He continued:

One of the great insights of Yoga is that our thinking process, which is generally the source of suffering for most people, is directly related to the breath. And that through the sustained daily practice of *prāṇāyāma* there will be an ability to gain a mastery over one’s thoughts. And for me that is really the most critical piece of Yoga that has been scientifically verified, and is really the foundation of the sorts of changes that people detect and that people are searching for. One other interesting side observation that comes from the data is that the respiration rate of an everyday non-Yoga person is somewhere in the vicinity of 17 breaths a minute and for a yoga person it’s 10 to 12 breaths a minute. This shows that the whole metabolism has been calmed down to a certain degree, and it’s not just while you’re doing Yoga. It’s something that people of Yoga naturally move into as they become firm in their practice. (ibid.)

The way that *prāṇāyāma* interacts with the body-mind is detailed in both physiological and psychic research. In the latter, the Yoga scholar Georg Feuerstein (1990) describes *prāṇāyāma* as an intrapsychic process that is fundamental to all Yoga. It is closely associated with “the flow of psychosomatic energy (*prāna*) in the body. In other words, attention and breath are interconnected” (Feuerstein 1990, p. 41). Physiological research into the correlation of breath and body-mind experience, and its impact on

¹⁶⁹ Ravinder Jerath (2006) and his colleagues define *prāṇāyāma* as the “practice of voluntary breath control, consisting of conscious inhalation, retention and exhalation...Versions of *prāṇāyāma* vary from single nostril breathing to belly breathing. *Prāṇāyāma* consists of three phases: “*pūraka*”(inhalation); “*kumbhaka*” (retention) and “*recaka*”(exhalation) that can be either fast or slow” (p. 2).

health and wellbeing,¹⁷⁰ has increased in recent years. Ravinder Jerath and his colleague's (2006) summary of this 'prorioceptive therapy' starts with their definition of *prāṇāyāma* and provides a brief overview of its effects. *Prāṇāyāma* is they propose a:

manipulation of breath movement...[and]...has been shown to contribute to a physiologic response characterized by the presence of decreased oxygen consumption, decreased heart rate, and decreased blood pressure, as well as increased theta wave amplitude in EEG [electroencephalography] recordings, increased parasympathetic activity accompanied by the experience of alertness and reinvigoration. (Jerath et al. 2006, p. 1)

Jerath et al. (2006) acknowledge that it is still not clear how *prāṇāyāma*¹⁷¹ does this, but suggest that its breath control techniques interact with the nervous system in a way that affects metabolism and autonomic functions. They claim that *prāṇāyāma* somehow "functionally resets the autonomic nervous system through stretch-induced inhibitory signals and hyperpolarization currents propagated through both neural and non-neural tissue which synchronizes neural elements in the heart, lungs, limbic system and cortex" (Jerath et al. 2006, p. 1). Angelina at Ramapo spoke of the importance of the breath in her yoga practice. She said, "I think the breathing and the attention is what makes the yoga practice different from just those random stretches that you do before you head out for a jog" (Interview, 29th October, 2009). When speaking of the anxiety she suffered, Baden, a student at Ramapo, described how the emphasis on the breath in yoga had helped her, "often the anxiety thing can start because you're doing high chest breathing and that will give you more anxiety, so if you can slow your breathing down

¹⁷⁰ *Prāṇāyāma* is one of a number of yogic techniques that appear to produce the relaxation response. For research that investigates the benefits of *prāṇāyāma* and other yoga practices see: Astin (1997) for the effects of yoga on psychological symptomatology; Bastille and Gill-Body (2004) for yoga in physical therapy; diStasio (2008) for yoga in cancer care; King and Brownstone (1999) for the neurophysiology of yoga; Raub (2002) for the psychophysical effects of Haṭha Yoga; Singleton (2005, 2010) for the impacts of yoga on 'relaxationism'; Whiting (2006) for natural pain control; Van Puymbroeck et al. (2007) for yoga and the health of informal caregivers.

¹⁷¹ The Australian neurophysiologist, doctor and Yoga scholar Philip Stevens (Swami Samnyasananda) has conducted yoga and *prāṇāyāma* research for 30 years, and his findings support the benefits suggested above. He asserts that, "how you breathe also affects the heart, brain and nervous system, with a direct correlation between the breath and anxiety or well-being. When stressed, the breath is shorter, more frequent and quite shallow. This breathing pattern maintains a level of arousal. Slower and deeper breathing results in a more relaxed state via autonomic reflexive stimulation and decreases the partial pressure of carbon dioxide in the lungs and bloodstream. With a corresponding increase in the pH of the blood, it becomes less acidic and more effective blood oxygen synthesis occurs. There are also benefits in metabolism and brain function" (Stevens 1990, ¶ 15). Also see: Penman Cohen and Stevens, 2012.

that can be really helpful” (Interview, 10th December, 2009). The interrelational physiological model outlined in Jerath et al’s *prāṇāyāma* research illustrates the *feeling nexus*. For despite it being a hypothetical process, only known by its outcomes, the sense of integration and balance that can result from *prāṇāyāma*, described by the co-researchers and Jerath and his colleagues, suggests the presence of an underlying integrative force such as the *feeling nexus*.

Positive physical outcomes of contemplation

Psychological research into the positive outcomes of contemplation, such as stress reduction and the increased ability to focus, suggests that these benefits result from a phenomenon called ‘physiological coherence’.^{172,173} This is a state in which the psychological, cognitive and emotional systems and neural communication networks come into alignment (McCraty et al. 2009, p. 10). The correlates of physiological coherence include a regular heart rhythm, decreased sympathetic nervous system activation, increased parasympathetic activity and increased heart-brain synchronisation (Hart, 2004). The results of these physiological changes, regularly reported by the co-researchers, are outlined by Hart:

Physiological relaxation and slowed metabolism, a heightened self-awareness, and feelings of calm, improved concentration, empathy, perceptual acuity, a drop in anxiety and stress symptoms...[Meditation quite directly affects physiology]...We also know that physiology affects emotional response, cognition, and learning. For example, whereas some degree of stress can focus attention, undue emotional stress can inhibit performance, paralysing a student’s ability to write, answer test questions, or make free throws during a heated basketball game. (2004, p. 31)

Hart separates these positive outcomes into ‘main’ or immediate state changes, and ‘trait’ changes, which are those that endure over time. Main state outcomes are physiological relaxation, and include improved concentration, empathy and more

¹⁷² Physiological coherence is an optimal state in which the mind-body systems cohere to produce improved psychophysiological and cognitive performance (McCraty, 2009, p. 10).

¹⁷³ A number of neuroscientists researching contemplation support the physiological coherence theory, including Braboszcz et al. (2009); Deshmukh (2006); Kerr (2012); and Lutz et al. (2007(a), (b)).

effective performance in many fields including sports and academic test taking (Hart, 2008). The co-researchers described both state changes, for example, Jason spoke of main trait effects as the ‘trace’ of his yoga remaining in him beyond the practice. This and other outcomes have neurophysiological correlates, which relate directly to physiological findings associated with the instrumental use of contemplation in education (Hart, 2008).

Hart (2008) suggests that contemplative practices or ‘internal technologies’¹⁷⁴ impact the autonomic nervous system¹⁷⁵ in ways that produce these positive effects. He refers to physiological research associated with the autonomic nervous system to support his claim that contemplation increases students’ concentration skills and helps them retain and retrieve information. Three recent experiments using physiological response, functional brain mapping and EEG¹⁷⁶ recordings provide a brief overview of this research. The first is the work of Yi-Yung Tang and his colleagues (2009) who found that a five-day intensive meditation course improved attention and self-regulation. Their research showed that their participants’ heart rate, respiration and skin conductance response were significantly better than those of a control group who practised a relaxation method.

Secondly, Sarah Lazar et al.’s (2000) functional brain mapping of the relaxation response in meditation indicates that it can activate neural structures involved in attention and control of the autonomic nervous system. Lastly, Ravinder Jerath et al.’s (2006) research into the effects of *prāṇāyāma* established that this yogic breathing exercise increased parasympathetic activity. It contributed to a “physiologic response characterized by the presence of decreased oxygen consumption, decreased heart rate

¹⁷⁴ Hart’s phrase is analogous to Georg Feuerstein’s description of yoga as a ‘technology of ecstasy’, which is the title of his 1989 book.

¹⁷⁵ The autonomic nervous system or visceral nervous system is a part of the peripheral nervous system, which consists of the nerves and ganglia outside the brain and spinal cord. It mainly functions below the level of conscious awareness, where it acts as a type of control system, affecting heart rate, digestion, respiration rate, salivation, perspiration, pupil dilation, urination and sexual arousal. It is divided into three subsystems: the parasympathetic nervous system, which regulates internal organs and glands at an unconscious level; the sympathetic nervous system, which maintains homeostasis and activates the fight-or-flight response; and the enteric nervous system, which is related to the autonomic nervous system and controls the gastrointestinal system from the brain and spinal cord.

¹⁷⁶ Electroencephalography (EEG) is the recording of electrical activity along the scalp produced by the firing of neurons within the brain.

and decreased blood pressure, as well as increased theta wave¹⁷⁷ amplitude in EEG recordings” (Jerath et al. 2006, p. 566). It can be inferred from this research that contemplation positively impacts physiology, which in turn can cause changes in emotional response, cognition and learning (see also Lazar et al. (2005); Lutz (2004); Lutz et al. (2007(a)); MacLean et al. (1997); Murphy et al. (1997); Newberg et al. (2000, 2001); Tang et al. (2009); Travis et al. (2002)). These propositions suggest an underlying integrating force founding the balanced physiological states reported by Jerath, Lazar, Tang and others. The force, which is understood in this project to be the *feeling nexus*, is illustrated in their work and the physiological interrelational systems detailed in the neuroscience research of Cosmelli et al. (2007); Freeman (1999); Lutz (2007(a), (b)) and others examined in earlier chapters.

Contemplative education theorists are increasingly using neuroscience and meditation research in their work. Examples of this can be found in Richard Brady’s (2007) discussion of neuroscience and meditation research in the teaching of a 10th grade mathematics course; Eric Jenson (2008) provides an overview of the connections between brain function and educational practice; Denis Francesconi (2009) describes the convergence of cognitive neuroscience and pedagogy in his work on bodily consciousness and meditation training; Rick Repetti (2010) examines the role of contemplative neuroscience in his case for a contemplative philosophy of education; and Shauna Shapiro and her colleagues (2008) reference the integration of neuroscience research in education and its use to monitor focus and attention. These and other theorists are currently employing the findings of neuroscience and meditation research to support their claims for the benefits of contemplation in education. Although the physiological substrate, which they maintain founds these benefits, is engaged in this project, it is considered to be a level that is underpinned by an elemental substrate and its processes.

¹⁷⁷ The functions of *theta* waves or rhythms in the brain are not clearly understood. Some neuroscientists suggest that *theta* is associated with arousal, while others propose that it is associated with sensorimotor processing. However, a popular theory suggests that it is linked with mechanisms of learning and memory.

Neuroscience and the positive outcomes of expanded somatic focus in contemplation

The last 30 years of neuroscience and meditation research has revealed a sensorineural ground which founds the benefits of contemplation. While there is a growing literature in this area, I have chosen in this section to return to Catherine Kerr and her colleagues' research because of their focus on somatic mindfulness. Kerr et al. (2011(b)) concentrate on the 'body scan' section of the mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBR) method. This is a part of the MBR practices in which attention is placed on each part of the body, moving from part to part, until the whole body is scanned. In their research, Kerr and her colleagues used Magnetoencephalography (MEG),¹⁷⁸ which maps brain activity by recording magnetic fields that occur in the brain. They found that the subtle sensory focus, which can develop through the body scan and potentially other contemplative sensory focusing techniques, has implications for learning. This is related to the function of two brain networks in the lateral prefrontal cortex and the way that this area can be controlled or entrained by meditation. These areas are the medial prefrontal cortex network, which is associated with rumination and self-judgement, and the lateral prefrontal cortex network, which is associated with attention. Kerr (2012)¹⁷⁹ has found that meditation can 'turn up the volume' on the lateral prefrontal cortex network, which in effect turns down the volume on the medial prefrontal cortex network.

Kerr believes that this is due to the way that meditation interfaces with the workings of the thalamocortical circuit (TC), which sits beneath the cortex and acts as a gatekeeper for sensory input. Without the TC we would be flooded with sensation which would then overload our ability to decide between sensations, to make decisions and then to act. This circuit, which is located around the thalamus deep in the brain, is guided by focus – what we focus on is what the TC gives priority to. One of the ways that it does

¹⁷⁸ Dr Kerr and her colleagues used a copper-lined chamber that has 306 super-conducting electrodes, which can pick up the subtle magnetic/electrical activity of the brain. The electrical signal that this device picks up originates in the neural oscillation of neural activity in the central nervous system. These synchronised neuronal currents induce weak magnetic fields which despite being subtle can be picked up by the MEG device. While both the MEG and EEG signals originate in the same neurophysiological processes, the magnetic signals are less distorted than the electrical.

¹⁷⁹ While Dr Kerr conducted this research with a number of colleagues I reference her, as this section is primarily drawn from her 2012 webinar *The Neuroscience of somatic attention: A key to unlocking a foundational contemplative practice for educators*, broadcast by the Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education (<http://www.contemplativemind.org/archives/297> retrieved 21/03/2012).

this is through its ability to edit the presence and strength of the *alpha* brain rhythm and its incidence in certain parts of the cortex. It is important to understand that the cortex contains a map of the body in which every part of the body is represented. When attention is focused on a specific part, there is a corresponding increase in the *alpha* rhythm in that section of the cortex. Because of this, Kerr and her colleagues (2005) hypothesised that sensory-focusing exercises would enable practitioners to have more control over the TC and therefore over the intensity of the *alpha* rhythm.

They found that long-term meditators were able to regulate the ‘volume knob’ of the TC, and consequently had a heightened command of their reactions to their sensory engagement in the world. From this research, Kerr et al. (2005) propose that meditation can enable practitioners to regulate the body map, manipulate the *alpha* rhythm and develop refined control over the sensory input streams. They suggest that their findings can be generalised across the brain, which implies that meditators are better able to engage working memory and regulate emotion and cognition. As Kerr said in her webinar:

Sensory control gives you control over the dynamics of the cortex, it helps you change channels, it turns down the volume on the medial prefrontal cortex network, and turns it up on the lateral prefrontal cortex network, which is associated with attention. It gives better control over sensory, emotional and cognitive processes, emotion, perception and discharge. (Kerr, 2012)

It appears that Kerr and her colleagues have identified the brain architecture and processes implicated in the stress and anxiety reduction, ability to focus, retain and retrieve information, increased positive affect, metacognitive ability and memory reported from contemplation.

In addition to their findings related to the positive outcomes of deep sensory focus Kerr et al. (2005) also suggest that meditators learn to inhabit what they term the ‘body space’, which provides access to ‘presence’, a balanced calm state. Becoming familiar with the body space is a condition that facilitates learning, for it enables “students to learn to control sensory emotional processes and helps students and teachers to be more present” (Kerr, 2012). The co-researchers of this project frequently described

something similar to this state where they felt relaxed, and balanced, as a result of the heightened somatic focus they developed in contemplation. Kerr and her colleagues' findings regarding the development of skills described above reinforce the call from contemplative education theorists to return a contemplative orientation to education (see Bush (2006, 2010, 2011); Gunnlaugson (2009(a), (b)); Holland (2004, 2006); Hart (2004, 2008); Miller (1994, 2006); Sarath (2003, 2006); and Zajonc (2006 (a), (b), (c) 2008 (a), 2010)).

Aside from the useful insights provided by this neuroscience and meditation research,¹⁸⁰ I have been surprised at the ease with which I found a direct correspondence between it and the co-researchers' reports. For example, Kerr and her colleagues' (2005) MEG research into mindfulness-based practices supported the co-researchers' reports of increased focus, balance, clarity and equanimity. Jerath et al's (2006) work on *prāṇāyāma* reinforced Chapple's claims for the way it inhibits unhelpful or distressing thought patterns, while the three experiments Hart (2008) outlined, each present neurological foundations for the co-researchers' descriptions of lowered stress levels and increased abilities to focus and retain information.

Neuroscience, contemplation and the importance of practice

The co-researchers who had regular contemplative practices emphasised the need for a consistency of practice. Isabella at Ramapo College described the outcome of her long-term contemplative practice as the 'vacation lasting', for its effects she said, "stay with you even after you stop the practice" (Interview, 24th November, 2009). Eamon, a Yoga Psychology student at Ramapo, said "I think it probably has to do with like being able to discipline your mind. Like if you can control yourself to the point where you can only focus on one thing at a time, then you can get in really deep" (Interview, 9th December, 2009). While Catherine, a yoga teacher in Los Angeles, stressed the importance of the experiential aspect of Yoga, saying "for me it's a practice, right, so sitting around and talking about it without doing something seems strange" (12th

¹⁸⁰ Although I am aware that the results of the neuroscience and meditation research are contested, I support Vieten's (2009) suggestion, that while "there is a big risk of over simplifying the findings it is fair to say that science suggests it is possible to use intentional consciousness-based practices to make lasting changes in brain function and structure". Also see Cahn and Polich (2006); Lazar et al. (2000), (2005), 2007(a), (b); Murphy and Donovan (2004); and Travis and Wallace (1999).

October, 2009). She then spoke about the importance of the Yoga philosophy underpinning the physical aspects of yoga, and reiterated her need for discipline, saying:

The way I can tell is that when I stop doing the practice I get all in a spin...if I don't do the physical practices then I can't be grounded to what is real in front of me. I mean I can get into the *vāta* thing¹⁸¹ pretty easily. *Vāta* is the air, and fire is *pitta*. I mean, I think those two are a very Western combination right? It's really easy for me to get into the *vāta spin* (ibid.).

Catherine's combined Yoga and Christian meditation practice was just one of many methods the co-researchers' engaged, and despite their differences all the long-term practitioners emphasised the importance of the regularity of their discipline. Isabella said "my practice takes maybe seven minutes from start to finish and you know it's like the multi-vitamin and brushing my teeth, it's essential" (Interview, 24th November, 2009). Sharon at LMU was a swimmer and runner who took up yoga and meditation after an injury. When I asked her if the swimming and running helped with the yoga she said that all three required a certain level of 'will', which she thought made it difficult for some people:

You know I have some friends that don't exercise at all, and I don't think that they would have the concentration or the will to want to sit there for however long...and I think that running or swimming or any exercise for a longer period of time requires that will-power to stick with it, and I think you also need that for meditation and yoga. (Interview, 16th November, 2009)

The co-researchers' emphasis on regular practice is reinforced by neurophysiology research into the plasticity of the brain. Brain- or neuro-plasticity is a condition of the brain that allows it to change its structure. It was once thought that the adult brain did not change, but neuroscience has disproved this. In addition to the genetic and environmental factors that can affect the brain, some neuroscientists now believe that

¹⁸¹ In *āyurveda* (life-science), which is the traditional Indian medical system, *vāta* (air, wind, movement) is one of the three *doṣas* (bodily humors or constitutional types). The other two are *pitta* (fire, digestion), and *kapha* (water, holding together). *Āyurveda* suggests that an imbalance in the *doṣas* causes disease. Catherine's customisation of the system of the *doṣas* to fit her new understanding of herself is an interesting outcome of her yoga. This integration of the philosophy underpinning her practice into her self-image was common for a number of the co-researchers.

the brain has the ability to change over the life span. However, this depends on specific inputs which can impel it to create new connections between its neurons.

The experimental results of contemplation and meditation research by Lazar and colleagues (2005) at Harvard Medical School identified the impact of regular contemplative practice on the plasticity of the brain. Their magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) research with 20 long-term insight meditation practitioners¹⁸² initially found that mean thickness across the entire cortex did not differ between meditators and non-meditators. However, there was a significant difference in the distribution of the thickness and increased thickness in the right hemisphere.¹⁸³ In essence this suggests that meditation can *grow* the prefrontal and right anterior insula areas of the brain. Focused contemplative attention on internal somatic experience is important in this aspect of brain plasticity because it forms a part of a ‘cycle of attention’. In this cycle, focus on the somatic can *grow* the areas of the brain which in turn enhance the ability to sustain somatic awareness. This is supported by the understanding that the brain regions which ‘grow’ with meditation are believed to be involved in attention, interoception or a sensing of the internal body and sensory processing (Lazar et al. 2005). Ken Otter at St Marys California described this as “growing what you pay attention to, so we grow neural pathways around what we pay attention to” (Interview, 6th November, 2009).

Lazar and her colleagues’ (2005) findings related to the lasting effects of meditation are supported by neurobiological research. Michael West’s (1980) investigation of meditators’ lowered tonic arousal¹⁸⁴ (slow changes of base-level arousal) and their ability to sustain an internal locus of attention is a good example. West uses measures of autonomic and cortical activity, which highlights decreases in arousal and

¹⁸² Lazar et al. (2005) describe insight meditation as the “cultivation of attention and a mental capacity termed ‘mindfulness’, which is a specific nonjudgmental awareness of present-moment stimuli without cognitive elaboration...Formal practice involves sustained mindful attention to internal and external sensory stimuli (p. 1893).

¹⁸³ According to Lazar and her colleagues “the right hemisphere is essential for sustaining attention...Functional imagining and electrophysiological studies in humans and monkeys have implicated the right anterior insula in tasks related to bodily attention and increased visceral awareness” (2005, p. 1896).

¹⁸⁴ Tonic arousal is one of two primary arousal systems in the brain. Its function is to set the background tone of brain activity. It largely arises “from neurons that originate in deep brain (subcortical) structures and stimulates other neurons throughout the brain with the neurotransmitter acetylcholine” (Mackinnon 2011, ¶ 4).

arousability in meditators beyond the meditation state. His EEG results showed that changes in long-term meditators' brains over time were related to lower cortical arousal (West, 1980, p. 141), which indicates a shift to a state of relaxation. Travis and Wallace's (1999) Neural Model of Transcendental Meditation outlines two complementary neural networks which underlie the emotional regulation described by West. The first is a type of 'neural switch' that mediates the initial shift from physiological and cortical processing to the restful alert onset of meditation. They suggest that the second network, similar to a homeostatic threshold regulation mechanism, maintains this state (Travis & Wallace 1999, p. 312).

The enhanced interoception, stress reduction and focus that are outlined by Kerr, Lazar, West, Travis and Wallace and their colleagues are particularly important here. This is, I suggest, because their development initiates the apperception of the *feeling nexus*. In particular it appears that the sensing of the internal processes of the body forms part of a feedback loop in which interoception develops sections of the cortex that support interoception. As Lazar et al. (2005) suggest, it "may be useful to conceptualize meditation practice as engaging in an analogous set of cortical remodelling processes" (p. 1895). The importance of these findings for education relate to the function of the areas of the brain affected by and affecting contemplation. The subset of these cortical regions, which *grow* through contemplation, are associated with sustained attention, planning complex cognitive behaviours, decision-making and moderating social behaviour.

Benefits of contemplation similar to those described above by Lazar and her colleagues, were outlined earlier in the research into physiological coherence and the physiological response, functional brain mapping and the EEG research of Tang et al. (2009), Kerr et al. (2005), Lazar et al. (2005) and Jerath et al. (2006). This research not only reveals physiological processes underpinning the positive outcomes of learning through contemplation, it suggests the presence of an ecological substrate and an underlying integrative force such as the *feeling nexus*. In addition Kerr and her colleagues (2005) emphasise the relations of somatic focus, contemplation and positive academic results. Both Lazar and Kerr (2005) have found that contemplation interfaces with areas of the brain implicated in learning. Importantly, they have shown that regular contemplative practice thickens these areas, the positive outcomes of which were corroborated by the reports of co-researchers with regular contemplative practices. These results, and other

neuroscience and meditation research currently impacting contemplative education, are further supporting its claims for the inclusion of contemplation in education.

In summary

These neuroscience findings provide a physiological framework for the co-researchers' stories of change. What they described from their contemplative experience revealed the way they learnt inner *feelings*, starting with pre-predicative experience and increased interoception and somatic awareness that led to their somatic learning. The importance of regular contemplative practice for developing this form of learning was emphasised by both the co-researchers and a number of neuroscientists examining contemplation. Results for the co-researchers who had a consistent practice were varied, and included the development of, as Hannah described it - a "sense of internal reference that's healthy and strong" (Interview, 22nd November, 2009). She spoke of this 'internal reference' supporting her in her professional and private life. In the past she had "always been so reactive" (ibid.) but her practice enabled her to have a more equanimous relationship with herself and others.

Regular contemplative practice can also be understood as a form of psychosomatic entrainment. It is significant in this examination of the contemplative state of consciousness in education, because contemplative entrainment resists another more common form that is currently negatively impacting learning. This is the daily entrainment by media-driven experiences, which I have termed *tellyvisualarium*.¹⁸⁵ By this I mean the world created by the media and new technology which encourages multi-tasking and a short and fragmented attention span. This kind of attention or 'lazy interactivity' (Jensen 2005) is sought by television programmers who design applications for television that are intended to facilitate "quick decisions, short attention span, handheld remotes and instant gratification"¹⁸⁶ (Jensen 2005, p. 95).

¹⁸⁵ This is a term I have developed to mean a space or 'state' created by modern Western consumer culture, which is supported and developed by the media. I created it by combining 'television' and 'aquarium' to suggest that while it may feel as though we enter the world through television and other media, we are, I believe, 'contained' outside it, within the aquarium of the media.

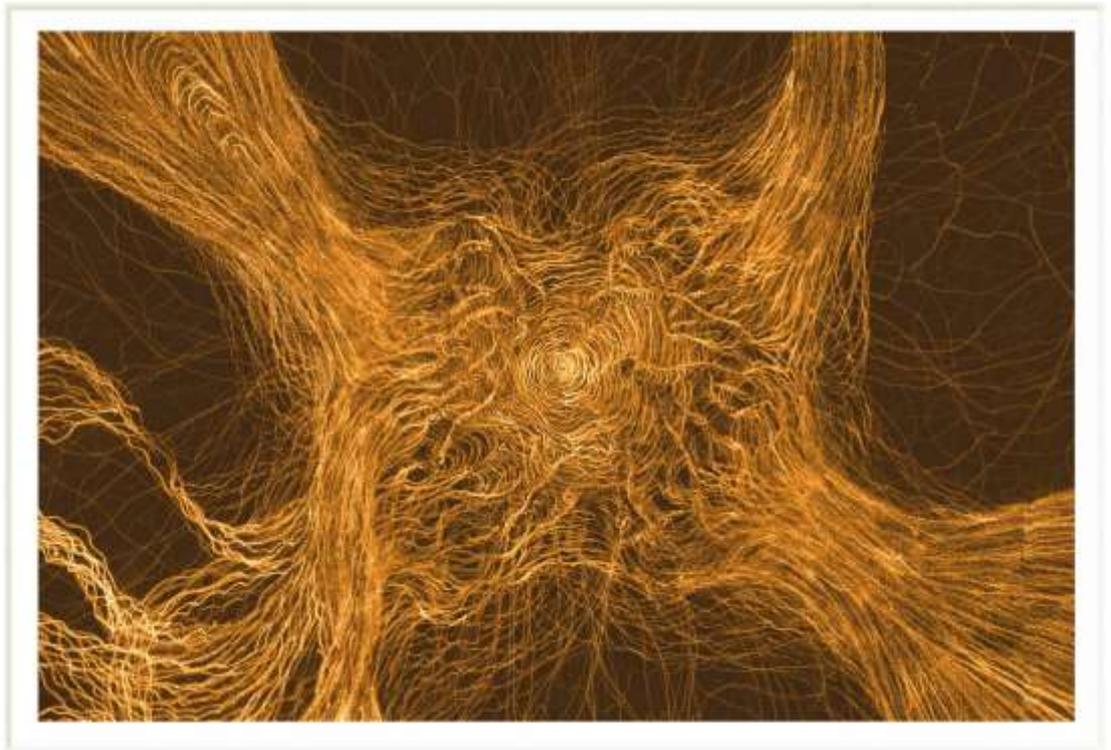
¹⁸⁶ Jensen gives the example of applications that are being designed for sports programs where television producers are looking for ways to retain viewers' attention during slow moments in sports transmissions. Such applications are "additional information, statistics, betting, games, and chat" (Jensen 2005, p.95). Online shopping, another area of lazy interactivity design in television, uses "quick-hit applications like buy-the-CD on MTV or buy-the-t-shirt on Baywatch" (ibid.).

Ken Otter terms the state of attention synchronised by these technologies as ‘mindlessness’. He introduced this term when describing the use of contemplative practice in the Master’s level leadership program that he convenes:

We have options, we have mindful and mindless options but our hardwiring, I believe, provides us with a ground for mindfulness, it’s our ‘natural state’. The choices we make about it, and how we’re organised collectively around those choices, can predispose us towards mindful orientations, though I think Western civilisation is oriented around mindlessness, because I think its fundamental orientation is fear and violence. (Interview, 6th November, 2009)

He believes, as I and many of the contemplative educators I spoke to, that it is important to engage contemplation to reverse the effects of mindlessness which are negatively impacting education. This chapter sought to engage these issues through its examination of the impacts of the pre-predicative and somatic aspects of contemplative states of consciousness in education. In its exploration of the first two phases of the *learning feelings* process, it revealed links between pre-figurative and bodily awareness, the *feeling nexus* and somatic learning. By doing this, it suggested that the sense of integration, which the *feeling nexus* experience can produce, is what founds learning through contemplation. In the following chapter an intermediary stage of meaning making in the *learning feelings* process is critically examined through the co-researchers’ reports, Yoga, phenomenology and transformative and contemplative education theory.

Chapter Seven: *Learning Feelings: An Intermediary Stage*



Cameron Beau Wylie Foster, 2013

I was going through a slump and my teacher suggested that I chant one of the Yoga Sutras: *vitarka-bādhane pratipakṣa-bhāvanam*.¹⁸⁷ It means something like ‘when negative thoughts are prevalent, change and think of positive thoughts’. You know Desikachar¹⁸⁸ says that when we have negative feelings, that it can help to reflect on the possible consequences of alternative attitudes. So basically it’s a practice in the opposite direction. You know there is so much wisdom in the *Sūtras*, Patanjali kind of knew the nature of the mind and all of its distractions and the pitfalls and the ups and downs, and he basically has an answer for everything. (Interview with Isabella, 24th of November, 2009).

Isabella, an academic and yoga teacher at Ramapo, describes the second stage of *learning feelings* above. Her adoption of a Sanskrit chant practice, which alleviated her negative thought patterns, illustrates this intermediary stage in which the pre-predicative, somatic and cognitive intersect. It appeared that her initial translation of the *feelings* that arose from the rhythmic Sanskrit chanting occurred through her intentional engagement with this practice in the ‘opposite direction’. Although this Yogic intervention is based on cognitive instruction, and there are less prescribed ways the co-researchers began to cognitively frame the pre-predicative and somatic, it is a useful example of the second stage of *learning feelings*. In this intermediary or partially cognitive phase of learning through contemplation, the co-researchers made meaning as they moved between *felt* (pre-predicative) and bodily knowing, and cognitive knowing. The third phase, described in the following chapter, is more directly cognitive, and relates to the making of meaning as it is commonly understood in transformative education.¹⁸⁹ This cognitivist approach to meaning making is premised on the rational construction of knowledge.

¹⁸⁷ *Vitarka-bādhane pratipakṣa-bhāvanam* (*Yoga Sūtra* 2:33) is translated by T.K.V. Desikachar (2010) as “when these attitudes are questioned, self-reflection on the possible consequences of alternative attitudes may help” (p. 176). He then explains, “This means we must find a way to examine intellectually the consequences of the different attitudes possible at a given time or in given circumstances” (ibid.).

¹⁸⁸ T.K.V. Desikachar is a world-renowned yoga teacher and the son and student of the Yoga master T. Krishnamacharya. In the 1960s he left his job as an engineer to study with his father, and in 1976 opened the *Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram*, a non-profit yoga centre in India (www.kym.org/tkvd.html).

¹⁸⁹ The direct links between transformative and contemplative education are outlined by Arthur Zajonc who claims that “contemplative inquiry not only yields insight (*veritas*) but also transforms the knower through his or her intimate...participation in the subject of one’s contemplative attention. Contemplative education is transformative education” (Zajonc in Waxler & Hall 2011, p. 97).

In this chapter the intermediary phase of cognitive change is introduced by second and third-wave transformative education theorists' definitions of meaning making (see Chapter Six, p. 163), followed by an outline of a permeable form of cognition and a 'true self' experience, which is a significant aspect of cognitive change. Although this encounter with an essential self was foundational in the co-researchers' meaning making, they often weren't able to describe it beyond metaphors, such as a sense of 'oneness' or 'connectedness'. To expand on their attempts to define it, relevant Yogic and phenomenological theory is outlined. This is followed by an examination of the co-researchers' interrelational experience and movement through internal layers and levels to a ground-of-being. This chapter sees a return to themes described in Chapter Five, although that earlier review focused on the pre-predicative experience of these aspects and this chapter engages these themes to emphasise their role in the co-researchers' intermediary stages of cognitive meaning making. The chapter concludes with a critical examination of interrelational and intersubjective experience in pedagogical theory.

This schema of learning through contemplation, like the other models of learning in this project, is presented in a linear fashion, although it was not always experienced in this way. Some co-researchers did not move through all the stages, while others engaged them in an iterative rather than linear fashion. Nonetheless, the sequence is drawn from experiences that occurred regularly enough for it to suggest this process of learning through contemplation. However, the results of this process were varied, for some of the co-researchers it resulted in minor adjustments, and for others their lives changed significantly.

The extra-rational and meaning making

Before moving on to the true self and interrelational features of the intermediary phase of cognitive change in *learning feelings*, an extra-rational aspect of meaning making is sketched here because it supports this project's thesis of pre-predicative and somatic learning in contemplation. The understanding of pre-figurative and bodily knowing developed out of an engagement with the co-researchers' stories of change, and is supported by second and third wave transformative education theory. Many of these theorists critique the emphasis on the rational by the first wave, which is grounded in the seminal work of Jack Mezirow (1991, 2000, 2010). This rationalist approach is

exemplified in Mezirow's method, which is founded on psychoanalytic and critical social theory, and is primarily analytical and cognitive (Imel, 1998).

Second and third wave theorists, such as Kaisu Mälkki (2010), problematise the absence of the subjective in Mezirow's early work. She questions, as I do, the place of reflection in Mezirow's work, claiming that in it "the origins and dynamics of reflection itself remain unexamined" (Mälkki 2010, p. 46). In her investigation of its origins Mälkki relates Antonio Damasio's neurobiological theory of affectivity and consciousness to Mezirow's unfinished examination of reflection, which is predominately focused in metacognition. She claims that the biological foundations of affect described by Damasio should be applied to 'perspective transformation' to extend Mezirow's thesis.¹⁹⁰ Specifically, she emphasises the pre-figurative aspect of Damasio's thesis in which "emotions are activated automatically, outside of consciousness, within the function of maintaining and protecting the living organism" (Mälkki 2010, p. 54). Mälkki also highlights relevant areas of Damasio's research such as his conception of the biological focus on the body's drive to maintain homeostasis and its involuntary, unconscious functions. She concludes that "the biological life-support system, which functions through emotions and the automatic orientation of attention, also supports the coherence of the meaning perspective" (Mälkki 2010, p. 54). Her proposition of a somatic foundation for perspective transformation is useful here. As is her suggestion that there are complex 'intertwinements' of the biological and affective that support change in learning. However, her biological thesis appears to inadvertently overlook the full range of human experience.

Transformative education theorists like Mälkki call for the inclusion of the extra-rational in accounts of transformation in education. Their work has been labelled the

¹⁹⁰ Central to the Mezirowian conception of meaning making is the understanding that meaning changes through a series of stages starting with the learners' critical reflection on their 'meaning schemes'. Reflection on these "structures of habitual expectations" (Mezirow 1991, p. 167) can result in learners experiencing the final stage in his schema, which is perspective transformation. This involves the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world" (ibid.). Mezirow has developed a 10-stage schema of transformative learning that starts with a disorienting dilemma, and "moves through phases such as: self-examination, critical assessment of assumptions, recognition that others have shared similar transformations, exploration of new roles or actions, development of a plan for action, acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing the plan, tryout of the plan, development of competence and self-confidence in new roles, and reintegration into life on the basis of new perspectives" (Mezirow in Imel 1998, p.2).

‘depth psychology approach’ and much of it is said to be grounded in the research of educational psychologists Robert Boyd and J. Gordon Myers (Cranton & Taylor 2012). Like this project, a number of the theorists engaging their work emphasise subjective experience and trace the transition from the pre-figurative to cognitive in the creation of new meaning. However, their approach differs from this study, because theirs is commonly based on the Jungian concept of individuation “in which individuals bring the unconscious to consciousness as they differentiate Self from Other and simultaneously integrate Self with the collective” (Cranton & Taylor 2012, p.11). While the focus of these transformative theorists appears to parallel this chapter’s examination of a transitional phase in cognitive change, they have a predominately psychological orientation. This framing of individuation differentiates their investigation of transformation from this project’s philosophical investigation of the form and workings of the contemplative interior. Furthermore, a number of these second and third wave theorists often appear to assume the students’ subjectivities without questioning their nature or workings. Nonetheless, their examination of transformation and intersubjective experience and of varied aspects of meaning making such as affectivity, embodied knowing, spirituality, imagination, creativity and holism in education (Brookfield 2009; Cranton et al. 2006; Cranton & Wang 2011; Cranton & Taylor 2012; Dirkx 1997; Merriam 2008(a), (b); Miller 2010; Taylor 2001, 2006, 2007) reinforces the proposition that there is more to transformation in learning than the rational integration of change.

A permeable form of cognition

In addition to the extra-rational in meaning making, it is helpful to consider the place of a permeable form of cognition in learning through contemplation. This understanding of permeable cognition has been drawn from phenomenological and Yogic theory, which posits an interrelational form and foundation of the mind and cognition. This is, I suggest, what makes it permeable and what allows the co-researcher’s passage through the interrelational processes of pre-predicative, somatic and cognitive learning in their creation of new meaning.

Earlier chapters explored permeable forms of the somatic and affective to outline the way these aspects of the modes of human experience arose in contemplation and

enabled exchanges with the *feeling nexus*. This development of permeable aspects of the modes of being is founded on the co-researchers' stories of non-ordinary experiences of the somatic, cognitive, affective and transcendent. They spoke of their *feeling* in contemplation of moving beyond the boundaries of their bodies, of their emotions and thoughts being located in particular areas of their bodies and of transcendent experiences of merging with something 'bigger' than themselves.

This chapter's exploration of permeable cognition follows the definition in Chapter Four of a permeable affectivity, because cognitive change often came after affective embodied experience in the co-researchers' trajectory through contemplation. Their description of this passage started with contemplative pre-predicative and somatic experience, followed by the acquisition of new *felt meanings* which they then translated cognitively. This transitioning from the pre-predicative to the cognitive is founded, I argue, on an interrelational or permeable aspect of cognition. Experiences of this form of cognition and the movement through a 'continuum of cognition' underpin both the intermediary and directly cognitive stages of *learning feelings*.

I developed the continuum of cognition in an engagement with phenomenological and Yogic theory related to cognition. Both provide for a range of cognition from a conventional understanding of it as noesis through to a phenomenological 'non-egologic' elemental form of cognition and porous inter-relational mind. Similar understandings of cognition and mind can be found in Yoga, where they are inherently permeable because of the interrelationality of the microcosmic individual and the macrocosmic *Brahman*. The continuum of cognition developed from these theoretical propositions includes a common conception of cognition as the mental processing of information in which symbols or representations of experience are transformed through a 'mental faculty' into a formal system of signs called language (Varela et al. 1993). Francesco Varela and his colleagues term this cognitivism (Varela et al. 1993, p. 8). In this form of cognition the mind is thought to operate somewhat like a computer in a symbol manipulation process. At the centre of the continuum is a field of cognition that Varela et al. (1993) have termed *enactive* and describe it as 'embodied action' (p. xx).¹⁹¹

¹⁹¹ Varela and his colleagues outline *enactive cognition* with their suggestion that "cognition is not the representation of a pregiven world by a pregiven mind but rather the enactment of a world and a mind on the basis of a history of the variety of actions that a being in the world performs" (Varela et al. 1993, p. 9).

A pre-predicative cognition is at the opposite end to cognitivism and is the focus of this section and described here through Martin Heidegger's theory of *signification*.

Permeable cognition in phenomenology

This phenomenological development of permeable cognition is founded on the inherence of *signification* in the *Dasein*,¹⁹² or its interpenetration of the *Dasein*, plus a phenomenological reading of the interrelationality of the mind and body. It starts with Heidegger's (1953/1962) definition of *signification* in *Being and Time* as an "essential state of *Dasein* – of its being in the world" (Heidegger 1953/1962, p.121). Here Heidegger introduces its elemental nature, which he emphasises with the proposition that the *Dasein* is able to assign itself relations because it already contains pre-existent possible relations. Heidegger suggests that these 'possibles' (potential relations), such as the 'in-order-to's' and 'towards-this', and others, are what *Dasein* is already 'primordially' familiar with. These potentialities inherent in the *Dasein* are revealed in acts of understanding as "the possibility of giving these relations an explicit ontologico-existential interpretation...grounded in this familiarity with the world" (Heidegger 1953/1962, p. 119). As cognition occurs, these primal relations are disclosed. They are as Heidegger says, 'held *before* themselves', which results in the constitution of cognition. This understanding or assigning of meaning is termed 'signifying'. As Heidegger explains, the *Dasein* "'signifies' itself: in a primordial manner it gives itself both its Being and its potentiality-for-Being" (Heidegger 1953/1962, p.120). *Signification* then is inherent in *Dasein*, which is what provides for its interrelationality, for "the relational character of these relations...[is] one of signifying" (Heidegger 1953/1962, p. 120). Thus signifying can be understood to provide a permeable form of cognition.

This phenomenological understanding of the permeable form of cognition is further supported by the conception of an interrelational or porous mind. This is based on the relations between the perceiving subject's intentionality and the phenomenality of the object of perception. The phenomenologists Shaun Gallagher and Dan Zahavi (2008)

¹⁹² The term *Dasein*, as used by Martin Heidegger, can simply be translated as a primal state of 'being', which is a being-in-the-world. Heidegger explains that, "Dasein is not an anthropological, psychological, or biological concept. We can think of Dasein as a condition into which human beings enter, either individually or collectively" (Heidegger 1935/2000, p. xii).

propose that an understanding of the relationship between intentionality and phenomenality hinges on the internalism-externalism debate in phenomenology. While they emphasise that there is no clear divide between phenomenologists' propositions in this area, they also suggest that there is a general understanding that mental states can be either 'internal', that is independent of the external world, and 'external' or determined by the world.

Describing their position in this debate, Gallagher and Zahavi suggest that "the mind is essentially determined by its intentional relationship with the world (2008, p. 122). They claim that intentionality is not a "relation between a psychical subject and a physical object" (ibid.), which is an 'internalist' view. Rather, theirs is an 'externalist' approach, which understands that the presence of objects lies in the perceiving of them. In the development of their externalist position, Gallagher and Zahavi aim to move beyond a dualistic understanding of "a self-contained mind and a mindless world" (2008, p. 123) by proposing the "co-emergence of mind and world" (Gallagher & Zahavi 2008, p. 125). Their assertion of this mutual interpenetration can lead to an understanding of a permeable mind, which Merleau-Ponty describes as:

neither here, nor here, nor here...and yet it is 'attached', 'bound', it is *not without bonds*...The mind is in no objective site, and yet it is invested in a site which it rejoins by its environs, which it circumvents, as my locality for myself is the point that all the vanishing lines of my landscape designate to me, and which is itself *invisible*. (1968, p. 222)

Permeable cognition in Yoga

A similar understanding of permeable cognition can be found in Yoga, and although it is framed differently, its permeability also results from an inherent interrelationality. The Yogic form of permeable cognition and mind is derived from its structure and the part it plays in *mokṣa* or liberation. This starts with its essential nature as the *manomaya kośa* (mental body/sheath), which is one of the seven *kośas* (sheaths). In the taxonomy of the *kośas*, as described earlier in this project, each sheath is permeable because they are able to intersect or interpenetrate each other. It is not only the permeability of the *kośas* but also the exchanges between the four aspects of *manomaya*

kośa that make it inherently interrelational and in that sense permeable. These four parts are *manas*, the instinctive/lower mind; *ahaṃkāra*, the sense of I-ness; *citta*, memory; and *buddhi*, higher mind. Each of these aspects can intersect the other in a similar fashion to the *kośas*. The Yoga scholar Georg Feuerstein provides an example of this with his definition of *citta* or the ‘I-ness’ of the mind, which he describes as being ‘all-pervasive’ (1990, p. 79). Unlike conceptions of the mind as a bounded entity contained in the brain, the mind in Yoga is interspersed through the individual and its surrounds by the complex of the four facets of the mind and the interweaving of the five *kośas*.

The second aspect of the permeable mind in Yoga relates to the interrelationality of the mind-body complex, which is linked to the way that yoga practices can lead to *mokṣa* or Self-realisation. These practices can result in *mokṣa* when the adherent realises their ‘true nature’ as *Brahman*, the divine absolute that interpenetrates all phenomena. This is due to the *psychotechnology*¹⁹³ of Yoga, outlined in Patanjali’s *Yoga-Sūtras*,¹⁹⁴ which Feuerstein (2008) describes as *psychocosmograms*, or guides to the inner and outer worlds. Feuerstein’s definitions of Yoga emphasise its psychological nature and ability to generally reveal the mirroring of *Brahman* in creation, and specifically in the practitioner. As described in previous chapters, this is possible because the inner being of the adherent parallels “the structure of the cosmos itself...which is composed of the same fundamental layers that compose the hierarchy of the external world” (Feuerstein 2008, p. 239). In other words, the *psychotechnology* of yogic practices can disclose the interrelationality of *Brahman* (the macrocosm) and the *yogin* (the microcosm). In addition, the physic anatomy outlined in the schema of the *manomaya kośa* provides for the permeability of the body-mind.

¹⁹³ Georg Feuerstein developed the term *psychotechnology*, believing that Yoga “deals first and foremost with the human mind or psyche” (Feuerstein 2008, p. 239).

¹⁹⁴ A *Sūtra* (thread) is an aphorism or collection of aphorisms that aids the adherent or scholar to memorise sacred texts. The *Yoga-Sūtras* are a foundational Yogic text written by the sage Patanjali possibly in the 2nd century BCE (this date is contested). The *Yoga-Sūtras* are divided into four books or chapters each containing 196 aphorisms. These are the *Samādhi Pada* (51 *sūtras*), in this *sūtra* Yoga is initially defined, and then described as the means to attain *samādhi* (bliss); the *Sādhana Pada* (55 *sūtras*), which outlines *Kriya Yoga* (Yoga of action), and *Aṣṭāṅga Yoga* the eight-limbed or *Rāja Yoga*; the *Vibhūti Pada* (56 *sūtras*), which describes the supranormal powers or *siddhis* that can be attained through Yoga, while warning against focusing on attaining these powers. Lastly, the *Kaivalya Pada* (34 *sūtras*), which describes the liberation, which can be found through Yoga when the transcendental Self is realised.

Yoga and phenomenology's shared understandings of the interrelationality of the mind-body highlight its foundation in an elemental substrate. In Yoga this is the divine ground of *Brahman* and in Heidegger's theory of *signification* the 'beingness' of the *Dasein*¹⁹⁵ as being-in-the-world. The *Dasein* is the "site that being requires in order to 'happen' at all" (Tonner 2010, p. 73). This primordial foundation is, I suggest, similar to the ground-of-being outlined in Chapter Five, interkinesthetic affectivity described in the section on permeable affectivity in Chapter Three, and Heidegger's use of the *befindlichkeit* or 'pre-ontological understanding of being' outlined in chapter five. As forms of this ecological substrate, these permeable aspects of the modes of being have its interrelational nature, which is what makes them porous, mediating forces or processes that interpenetrate their 'outer' forms and contexts. Their permeability, I suggest, provides for many of the interrelational experiences that the co-researchers described, and allows the *feeling nexus* to combine them in the contemplative interior.

The 'true self' or 'natural state' experience

This section takes up where the last chapter left off. After describing the positive impacts of regular practice, many of the co-researchers spoke of experiencing what they termed their 'true self'. The concept of the true self was introduced in Chapter Five's consideration of its relations as *ātman* or the true self to *Brahman* as the ground-of-being. Chapter Seven provides a more detailed Yogic and phenomenological definition to reinforce its role in the *learning feelings* process. The true self experience is a fundamental aspect of the intermediary stage of *learning feelings*, and is important because it lends a sense of stability to the co-researchers' pre-figurative and somatic contemplative experience. It commonly arose in this stage of *learning feelings* and is described by educational philosopher Daniel Vokey (2009) as immediate, non-conceptual, direct intuition (p. 344). In her reference to Nash's work on spirituality and education, Laura Jones (2005) characterises this stage for students as their "straining forward toward mystery, toward a luminous darkness, toward an insatiated desire for a meaning beyond meaning" (p. 4). I agree that the true self experience has a sense of 'reaching out'; however, in this aspect of her work Jones shifts directly to the cognitive

¹⁹⁵ This understanding of *Dasein* as the ground of signification is indicated by Philip Tonner (2010) who claims that "Dasein is always there in its world or meaningful context of significance. There is no Dasein without world and no world without Dasein" (p. 73).

framing of these experiences, where students ask, “What am I? Why am I? How should I act?” (ibid.). This chapter looks to a stage of meaning making that precedes this, in which the co-researchers shifted between pre-predicative and embodied, and cognitive engagement with the true self. Up until this point, in their passage through the contemplative interior, the co-researchers’ relationship with their contemplative experience often remained uncertain. However, when they encountered their true self it provided them with a sense of stability, equanimity and wholeness in both the intermediary and more direct cognitive phases of cognitive meaning making.

Agnes, a yoga teacher in Los Angeles, described the balanced states that arose for her students in the true self/nature experience:

I think that most of my students perceive it as peace; it’s just almost like coming home to their true nature. Even though much of their time is spent projecting this stuff onto themselves like, ‘what I need to be’ or ‘have to be’ or ‘this is what I am to that person and that person’, which means that they never allow their true self or inner being to just *be*, with no expectations. (Interview, 9th November, 2009)

The development of a regular contemplative practice helped Agnes’s students, and other co-researchers, to maintain the balance they gained from the true self experience. It also facilitated their growing familiarity with, and trust of, this and other aspects of the transitional phase of the cognitive change in the *learning feelings* process.

Yogic and phenomenological propositions for the true self experience

While the co-researchers had a number of ways to describe the true self experience – as a *feeling* of ‘oneness’, ‘sense of balance’, ‘connectedness’ or their ‘natural state’, none described it beyond these metaphors. However, Yoga and phenomenology provide definitions. Yoga suggests that the equanimity that can arise from the true self is a result of the *dhāraṇā* (concentration, steady focus) in contemplation that strips away the discursive self or ego-personality (*jīva*). This allows them to encounter their *ātman*

(transcendental Self),¹⁹⁶ which underpins the self that can only perceive through the senses. The *ātman* both founds this ‘self’ and exists beyond it, although it cannot be “seen by the eye, cannot be grasped since it is the grasper, the seer, of everything. In other words, the Self reveals itself only to itself” (Feuerstein 1990, p. 40). Feuerstein’s claim that no ‘act’ of cognition is involved in the realisation of the *ātman* or true self supports its appearance in the co-researchers’ pre-predicative and somatic contemplative experience.

Contemplative apperception of the *ātman* often results from sustained practice, for in the early stages of contemplative practice the adherent is easily led back to the “mistaken belief that sense impression and reactions belong to it, and thus are private and subjective” (Collinson et al. 2002, p. 83). However, if contemplative practice continues all mental fluctuations or *vṛttis* can subside, so allowing the practitioner to enter their true self or *puruṣa* (pure consciousness). This Self, which underpins the *jīva*, is outlined in the *Śiva-Saṃhitā* (I.62) a work on *Hatha-Yoga*, which states, “Having abandoned the perception of false states [of consciousness], the renouncer of all volition...certainly beholds the Self in the Self by the Self” (Feuerstein 1990, pp. 40, 41). Contemplation can lead to the realisation of the true self because the *ātman* is pre-existent. As educational theorist Ramnath Narayanswamy confirms, “Self-realization, then, is not a goal or an objective that is to be achieved but one that is already present. Getting rid of ignorance is all that is required. What remains is our true nature” (Narayanswamy 2008, p. 119).

The true self in phenomenology

In the interviews I conducted with James Morley in New Jersey, he spoke of apodictic or direct experience, which I believe can be understood as a phenomenological true self experience. Morley started by referencing William James’s definition of meditation as “direct, pure, or apodictic experience”¹⁹⁷ (Interview, 19th November, 2009). He

¹⁹⁶ Self with a capital ‘S’ is used in definitions of *ātman* to denote the transcendental ‘S’elf as opposed to the ego-bound ‘s’elf.

¹⁹⁷ William James defined ‘pure experience’ as experience prior to the subject-object distinction. He wrote, “pure experience is the name which I gave to the immediate flux of life which furnishes the material to our later reflection with its conceptual categories” (James, 1909/2008, p. 348).

suggested that Husserl's engagement with James's work¹⁹⁸ influenced his development of the realm of pure experience, which he termed the *Lebenswelt* or life-world. Morley then proposed that Husserl's theory provides a reflective method that can reveal the *Lebenswelt*, which is "a realm of pure experience consisting of constitutional acts of our intentionality" (Mall 1973, p. 64). The apodictic experience that can result from the application of the *epoché* can be described as 'self-evident', a mode of consciousness that "consists in the *self-appearance*, the *self-exhibiting*, the *self-giving*, of an affair, an affair-complex...a universality, a value, or other objectivity in the final mode: 'itself there', 'immediately intuited', given '*originaliter*'" (Husserl in Casey 2000, p. 98).

In his account of apodictic experience Morley correlated¹⁹⁹ the *epoché* and the Yogic concept of *nirodha* (restriction), suggesting that they are both defined by a sense of restriction, suspension or 'putting aside' (Morley 2009). His description of the apodictic state of consciousness that can result from this suspension of discursive thought is a state that:

just gives itself without your thinking, it just comes to you as essences or meanings in that intuitive way. And it can be an emotion, an intuition, it's not just cognitive and it's self-evident, it's its own truth. You don't need verification because it's self-evident in how it comes to you. That's what phenomenology teaches us – to see the world as it gives itself, on its own terms, in itself and of itself. (Interview, 19th November, 2009)

The form of apodictic or direct experience that Morley attributes to contemplation is defined by the loss of a sense of dualism that is inherent in an individual's 'subjective' experience of the 'objective' world. Direct experience can, according to Morley, lead to the sense of the merging of the subjective and objective, which he describes as the collapsing of the distinction between the 'inside' and the 'outside' (Morley 2009). Paradoxically, the true self experience, that may then arise, results from the dissolving of the 'self'. When the ego-self fades in contemplation the object of focus can "talk

¹⁹⁸ In her *William James at the boundaries: Philosophy, science and the geography of knowledge* Francesca Bordogna reviews the relations between James and Husserl, starting with the proposition that "Husserl credited James with helping him release himself from the 'psychologistic standpoint'" (2008, p. 315).

¹⁹⁹ This correlation of the *epoché* and *nirodha*, and the suggestion that the *epoché* is a form of phenomenological meditation is discussed in more detail in previous chapters.

back to you, experientially it comes to you, it's not just something you're imposing or intending but it comes to you intuitively" (Interview, 19th November, 2009). This intuitive or direct experience, or the merging of the perceiver and perceived, inner and outer, which can be understood as the true self experience is described in similar terms by phenomenologist Anthony Steinbock (2007). He speaks of it as pre-figurative experience in which the practitioner has no "explicit awareness of the experience being mine" (Steinbock 2007, p. 173).

Interrelationality, intersubjectivity

There is an aspect of awareness that appears to be non-personal that appears to be experienced as connected to everything and everyone. Some will call it consciousness or non-dual awareness, but there appears to be underneath everything when you really quiet the body and mind, really remove the ego stories, there is something still left, and what's left seems to be this sort of interconnected field of essential benevolent awareness that's just sort of holding us all. (Interview with Cassie Vieten, 7th November, 2009)

The following section explores the interrelationality that Vieten describes above as an outcome of contemplation. Specifically, it examines two aspects of the co-researchers' interrelational experiences in the intermediary stage of cognitive meaning making. They are their sense of traveling through layers and levels to a ground-of-being and contemplative intersubjective experience. Both are important in the co-researchers' meaning-making processes because they, like the true self experience, added an internal sense of stability to their contemplative experience. The co-researchers' individual and collective experience of interrelationality shifted between pre-predicative, somatic and cognitive experience at this stage of *learning feelings*. Each aspect was significant, because it led to their cognitive framing of this interrelationality, where their *feeling* of being re-connected to themselves, or connected to others and the environment, reassured them about the validity of their practices. This then increased resilience through a growing sense of stability, which often supported the changes they had made in their values and lifestyles.

Interrelationality, layers and levels and the ground-of-being

A common way that the co-researchers first experienced this interrelationality in contemplation occurred in their movement through what they described as inner layers or levels. Contemplative practices appear to facilitate access to these ‘deeper levels’, which Michel Ferrari and George Potworowski (2008) describe as a ‘third way of knowing’. However, while experience of these levels of contemplation is always available, for they are “closer than your eyes” (Ferrari & Potworowski 2008, p. 155), there needs to be a willingness to enter. This is an important point for contemplative educators because it highlights the need to include practices that facilitate the development of trust in the design of contemplative curricula.

In this discussion of the layers and levels experience, I return to an aspect of the co-researchers’ contemplative experience that was detailed in Chapter Five. However, this contemplative experience is re-engaged to emphasise its role in the co-researchers’ making of cognitive meaning. This started with their *feeling* of an internal movement through different levels to a ground that they felt supported them. This experience facilitated their growing familiarity with, and somatic awareness of, contemplative inner space. Once reassured by this, a number of the co-researchers began to investigate these experiences using the philosophies underpinning their practices.

An important aspect of the layers and levels experience involved shifting from one type of mind or level to another. In his description of the relaxation he found through meditation, Neville, a student of Sanskrit at LMU, spoke of a ‘deeper mind’. He said “meditation rests the mind, it opens it up, it broadens the recall, it’s like you go deeper into the mind. It helps you access a much greater portion of the mind, rather than the superficial mind, which is very distracted, you get into the deep mind” (Interview, 2nd November, 2009). Roger, in Los Angeles, explained that contemplation helped him “more quickly settle into a deeper place” (Interview, 15th October, 2009). Jessica, a student in James Morley’s Yoga Psychology class, described a different way of being in contemplation, saying, “I had to tell myself to focus and then it got a lot easier and it just happened, this is part of another way of being” (Interview, 14th December, 2009). Her fellow student Eamon understood it as “thinking in different terms than you normally would” (Interview, 9th December, 2009).

Aside from their experiences of various interior levels, and the sense of balance and equanimity that resulted, the co-researchers also spoke of their learning in this phase. Their layers and levels experience led some to an understanding that the ‘depth’ of their internal journey was directly related to the depth of their understanding of the theoretical or experiential information in their courses. In her outline of her learning in contemplation, Agnes in Los Angeles said:

It happens at a different level, that’s why I’d like to have the meditation with every single class that I take and to do a little movement, even before the lecture starts or right at the end of the lecture. For me it’s very, very helpful, but some people just learn up here [Agnes touches her head], and they don’t want to be bothered with all of that. (Interview, 9th October, 2009)

The co-researchers’ experience of moving through a series of internal levels frequently involved their cycling between pre-predicative and bodily, and cognitive engagement in the layers and levels. In his research on affectivity and transformative education, the transformative pedagogue John Dirkx (2006) explores pre-predicative and somatic stages of learning. He claims that, “Emotions may be expressed in dreams or fantasies rather than put into discourse, and thus may at times be “extra-discursive” as well as “extra-rational”. Emotion-laden images that come to populate the learner’s conscious awareness reflect these unconscious meaning-making processes” (Dirkx 2006, p. 23). Despite Dirkx’s research being sited in transformative rather than contemplative education, and although its primary focus is the affective, his emphasis on the pre-figurative or ‘unconscious’ is useful here. In part this is because he outlines a series of stages in meaning making, which include extra-rational, somatic, cognitive, affective and spiritual processes (Dirkx 2006, p. 19). Dirkx’s emphasis on the extra-rational and affective in learning supports this study’s proposition that a number of the co-researchers’ cognitive framing of their *feeling meanings* developed in other ‘levels’ of reflective experience.

Intersubjectivity in groups²⁰⁰

The co-researchers' layers and levels experience supported new understandings of their own resilience, as they *felt* themselves travelling to a more integrated state. Vieten describes this as the “oneness experience with unitive consciousness” (Interview, 7th November, 2009). It started for the co-researchers when they returned to their bodies as described in earlier chapters. They then moved to the intermediary stage of cognitive change, where they began to *feel* and word their sense of being interrelational, and the equanimity that resulted.

Paradoxically this resulted from them *feeling* themselves fluid, permeable or interwoven with their worlds as they moved between different levels of their mind, internal somatic landscape and cognition. Jorge Ferrer at the CIIS suggests that this is a result of engaging what he terms the ‘embodied mind’.²⁰¹ This is a porous state of consciousness that develops through repeated contemplative movement between the pre-figurative, embodied and cognitive. Ferrer suggests that this movement “gradually makes the mind more porous and more permeable to those energies, you know, enlivened more enlightened” (Interview, 5th November, 2009). The gradual refinement of cognitive awareness that evolves through this passage wears away the sense of boundaries between body and mind, between pre-figurative, somatic and cognitive experience, which can result in permeable states of consciousness.

Repeated experience of these states through regular contemplative practice often resulted in the co-researchers' apperception of interrelationality, and in particular their *feeling* of the interweaving ecologies of the *feeling nexus* and its substrate. The frequent occurrence of this phenomenon and the resulting benefits highlight the importance of

²⁰⁰ This study acknowledges theoretical engagement with intersubjective experience, such as the seminal work of philosopher Martin Buber with Shmuel Eisenstadt (1992) on education, community and intersubjective dialogue; psychologists Karen Littleton, Clare Wood and Judith Staarman's (2010) discussion of children's attachment as an intersubjective educational experience; educational philosophers Paul Smeyers and James Marshall's (1995) work on Ludwig Wittgenstein's theories of a communal form of ‘deep intersubjectivity’; and educational philosopher James Garrison's (1995) definitions of John Dewey's pragmatic pedagogy as ‘practical intersubjectivity’, to name a few. However, the emphasis in this project is on pre-predicative, somatic and cognitive experience in contemplation, and the way it can lead to interrelational experience, including engagement with the *feeling nexus* and the elemental substrate that it resides in.

²⁰¹ According to Ferrer (Interview, 5th November, 2009), the embodied mind is partnered with the ‘analytical mind’, which produces a state where the individual is working from the ‘head up’ with an ‘absent body’.

introducing an awareness of it to education. The following overview of research by three educational theorists into cognitive features of the ecologies inherent in education sketches current theoretical engagement in the area. Bradford Keeny and Hillary Stephenson suggest that understanding this ecology or interrelationality as a 'recursive perspective' in pedagogy allows the student and teacher to "submit themselves to the interactional pattern that connects them" (2010, p.9). Keeny and Stephenson further describe this recursive orientation in their elaboration of the courses at CIIS, which are the focus of their thesis. They propose that in these courses the students and educators experience "immersion in case studies, group exercise, playful encounter, absurd confusion, literary invention, and the poetics of love...[which sets] up a situation where students and faculty could experientially meet recursivity" (Keeny & Stephenson 2010, p. 80). While Keeny and Stephenson acknowledge the importance of contemplation in education, their focus on the pedagogical application of processes that encourage intersubjectivity or recursivity has meant that their foundations remain unexamined in their work.

Educational theorists Judith Lysaker and Shelly Furuness (2011) link recursivity in the pedagogical relationship to the notion of 'care'. They critique a common hierarchal understanding of the relationship between student and educator by proposing that a relationship of care requires reciprocity and intersubjectivity. This then provides the "subtle interpersonal circumstances necessary for self-transformation" (Lysaker & Furuness 2011, p. 188). Lysaker and Furuness propose that both members of the relationship of care need to understand the other's perspective so that the "intentional relational context within which knowing self and other in new ways becomes possible" (ibid.). An important aspect of this relationality in pedagogy is their suggestion that care is not unidirectional, for there is an exchange between the one being cared for (the student) and the one giving care (the teacher) (Lysaker & Furuness 2011, p. 189). According to Lysaker and Furuness, this is essential in the creation of environments of trust that can become transformational educational settings. The interrelationality that Lysaker and Furuness examine in their research and pedagogy calls for the adoption of a 'dialogic epistemic stance'. This is due to the presence of relational 'spaces of dialogue' that exist between instructors and students, students and their peers, students and epistemology, and students and their 'self-positions'. While Lysaker and Furuness emphasise the interrelationality of the pedagogical exchange and acknowledge the

importance of the ‘whole personhood’ of the student, unlike this study, they do not directly employ students’ subjective experience.

Integral education theorist Olen Gunnlaugson examines the relational and intersubjective in his work on ‘presencing’, which he employs in a reflective educational practice founded on intersubjective inquiry within the classroom (Gunnlaugson 2009(a), p. ii). Presencing requires the cultivation of a “creative relationship and immersion with one’s work in the present moment” (Gunnlaugson 2009(a), p. 9). This is a form of mindful pedagogy, which produces immediate creative insight when it interfaces the ecologies inherent in pedagogy. Gunnlaugson describes a range of ways in which intersubjectivity has been included in contemplative, transformative and integral pedagogy, including approaches that focus on shared elements of attention, understanding and communication; the development of a shared pedagogical object for learning activities; special consensus-based learning activities that move from egocentric to sociocentric thought; and dialogue instruction which focuses on the interrelations between teacher, student and content (Gunnlaugson 2009(a), p.21).

Gunnlaugson suggests that the intersubjectivity underpinning these approaches enables the educator to reconnect with themselves, their students and the pedagogical practice and environment. When these ecologies are recognised and supported theoretically and pedagogically, “other possible meanings and insights can arise where our judgements or condition previously prevented us from hearing our students” (Gunnlaugson 2009(a), p. 68). The intersubjectivity that can be experienced through contemplative practices, such as presencing, can lead to the development of the more open, empathetic and creative approaches to teaching that Gunnlaugson details. However, he emphasises that this approach requires the contemplative educator to be a contemplative practitioner.

In Gunnlaugson’s thesis of intersubjectivity in transformative, integral and contemplative education, he concludes that the benefits of contemplation in learning arise from the awareness of the intersubjective field. It requires, he believes, a second-person (collective) form of contemplative consciousness to perceive this field, and this is where Gunnlaugson’s thesis differs from mine. His definition of first-person states, as types of ‘primary subjectivity’, and his focus on the second-person or ‘hidden

intersubjective dimension' not accessible through the first or third person²⁰² has meant that his examination of contemplative education overlooks the pre-predicative and its *felt meanings and languages*.

The co-researchers frequently reported the interrelationality and intersubjectivity that Gunnlaugson, Lysaker and Furuness, and Keeny and Stephenson describe in their approaches to contemplative, integral and transformative education. They spoke of engaging it in their individual contemplative practices and of *feeling* it when they contemplated in groups. Both were important parts of this intermediary stage of *learning feelings*. The individual experience led to them feeling more balanced and integrated, while group work resulted in their sense of being connected to other members of their practice groups or the natural environment. Both affirmed their growing awareness of the positive outcomes that contemplation was having in their lives, and led to new understandings of themselves. In particular it resulted in their sense of interdependence as they *felt* their connection with others, their daily contexts and nature. Jenny, a retreat participant at the Stillness in Action retreat in Brisbane, Australia, described the sense of connection or interrelationality that she experienced after meditating in nature:

And I remember really getting it on another level. What I keep on coming back to is that interconnectedness... I just felt like that we are not separate from the trees, or from these animals, these insects, this earth. That we are all...it was this incredible realisation that we've all come from the same place...and to really embody that, at the time. Not just to read about it, or theorise about it, but to sense it, and feel it, and breathe it, and see it, and experience it in my body, that was very, very exciting. (Interview, 25th January, 2009)

A number of James Morley's students spoke of the profound effect that their experiences of an interrelationality in the Sanskrit chanting section of his Yoga

²⁰² A common understanding of first-person states in educational theory are as internal and reflective; second person as intersubjective and generally experienced in group work; and third person as analytical and critical states of consciousness. Gunnlaugson (2009(a)) proposes that first-person forms of education involve learning that is drawn from internal reflective content, second-person forms are process-oriented and include collective processes of learning, while third-person education is analytical and investigative, and is assumed to be separate from the learner and their context.

Psychology course had on them. In varying ways they each described *feeling* the interconnection that Alicia spoke of:

At first it was silly, like our chanting, we had no idea what we were saying, but then afterwards people were reflecting on it. I felt like we were all kind of connected you know, the entire class? Everyone knew like, the chanting was like, a very personal thing. You took it however...since everyone kind of knew it was just a whole other level, of like, of just getting it, you know? One of the girls said it was like we transcended the class. (Interview, 14th November, 2009)

Cassie Vieten (2008) found something similar in her research into transformation through religious and contemplative practices, which is detailed in her *Living Deeply: The art and science of transformation in everyday life*. In our interview she suggested that contemplation can:

help people get in touch with what you could call a ground-of-being, or what Jung called the collective unconscious. Many people call it many things, but some aspect of awareness that is experienced subjectively as not being separate from other people and in a large sense really not being separate from anything. (Interview, 7th November, 2009)

Hannah experienced this same interrelationality in the yoga classes she teaches in New Jersey. She said that, “when you move with people, when you use a different part of your intelligence and your being with a group of people, that creates a bond” (Interview, 22nd November, 2009). Angelica described how in some of her yoga classes there was a feeling of being ‘in sync’ (Interview, 29th October, 2009). Jason in Los Angeles described it as the ‘social Wi-Fi’ in groups, which is the individual and collective pre-predicative awareness of others. He called it a “vibe, we can get it wrong but lots of times it’s pretty obvious, some people call it social Wi-fi, have you heard of that? You know, that you can tune into what other humans are doing, and you sort of pick up their buzz, and you come to their level, whatever it is” (Interview, 11th October, 2009). The metaphors of ‘frequencies’, ‘vibes’ and ‘shared energy’ were frequently used by the co-researchers when they spoke of this form of intersubjectivity. Jason, Angelia and other co-researchers’ *feeling* of this, both in groups and individually, not only affirms the

positive outcomes of contemplation, but is suggestive of the interweaving processes of the *feeling nexus*.

Although the transitional and more direct phases of cognitive change in the *learning feelings* process don't illustrate the *feeling nexus* as directly as the contemplative experience examined in earlier chapters, the co-researchers' experiences in this stage are still suggestive of it. The workings of the *feeling nexus* are implied in the co-researchers' sense of permeability, which arose for them in the true self and layers and levels experience, and in the interweaving of self and other that they *felt* in the intersubjectivity of group contemplation. Although it is obfuscated by the more cognitive features of this stage of meaning making, it is still understood to underpin this and all stages of learning through contemplation.

Interrelationality, intersubjectivity in pedagogical theory

The encounters with interrelational experience in contemplation described in this overview of individual and collective interrelationality are derived from the co-researchers' *feeling* of it as they moved between pre-predicative and somatic and cognitive stages of meaning making in contemplation. In this way it differs from many other pedagogical examinations of this phenomenon. To highlight these differences, and to emphasize the significance for pedagogy of interrelationality in contemplative meaning making, the research of three educational theorists is sketched, starting with Päivi Tynjälä who defines the interrelational as the experience of collective identity. Next is the work of the integral education theorist Olen Gunnlaugson who provides a method founded on a second-person or intersubjective approach and lastly, Sean Esbjörn-Hargens's integral education research is examined.

In her work on transformation in learning, Päivi Tynjälä (2012) specifies two aspects of 'sensemaking' in pedagogy – 'generic' sensemaking and 'intersubjective' sensemaking. The latter is similar to the intersubjective experience outlined earlier in this chapter, though in Tynjälä's work intersubjective 'sense' or meaning making refers specifically to the development of collective identities. This requires a shift from the individual to the collective in which "thoughts feelings and intentions are synthesized in the movement from 'I' to 'we'" (Tynjälä 2012, p. 91). Although the co-researchers speak

of *feeling* interconnected with their contemplative practice groups, they didn't specifically describe a group identity, rather their emphasis was on the immersive *feeling* of the experience. Their shift from the 'I' experience, which included the group plus the context, was more of an 'everything' as opposed to a 'we' experience.

Olen Gunnlaugson's work on integral and contemplative education introduced earlier further illustrates pedagogical engagement with interrelational or ecological experience. He has written extensively on intersubjectivity, contemplation and integral education (2007 (a), (b), 2009 (a), (b), 2010, 2011). In this work he develops what he terms the 'second-person or intersubjective approach' sketched earlier. He also identifies 'intersubjective theory' in education, which he claims has developed in response to the "problematic legacy of Cartesian rationalism that proceeds epistemically by objectifying and depersonalizing one's self and the world" (2009(b), p. 27). Second-person approaches counter this by revealing ways of knowing that arise through relationship. The understanding of relationality as a way of knowing and being, and the critique of Cartesian dualism, link this project with Gunnlaugson's, though his definition of the second person highlights the way that we differ. He states that second-person approaches to integral and contemplative education "involve exploring contemplative experience from an intersubjective position that is represented spatially as *between* us, in contrast to *inside* us (subjective position) or *outside* us (objective position)" (ibid.). His possibly unintentional Cartesianism, or division of contemplative experience into these apparently oppositional categories, highlights something quite different in this project's examination of contemplative experience. For this study understands, through the co-researchers' reports, that contemplation led to their sense of the inside, between and outside merging.

In his definition of integral education theory, Sean Esbjörn-Hargens provides an overview of the all-quadrant, all-level (AQAL) framework, its five elements, and integral methodological pluralism (IMP). This system, which he terms a "post-metaphysical approach to knowledge synthesis" (Esbjörn-Hargens 2007, p. 5), acknowledges the interrelationality of subjective and object states, and is in part framed by the work of the integral theorist Ken Wilbur. Esbjörn-Hargens suggests that the integralist approach aims to integrate four 'dimension perspectives', which are often at odds in mainstream pedagogical theory and practice. These perspectives – the

objective, interobjective, subjective and intersubjective – are linked in integral theory, with phenomenology, empiricism, structuralism, hermeneutics and systems theory in a way that “avoids postulating pre-existing ontological structures” (ibid.). The methodological focus and the interrelationality of these perspectives or states of consciousness link his integralist’s approach with this project. However, his rejection of inherent ontological structures is where they differ, for this study posits the elemental process of the *feeling nexus* and its substrate as foundational in contemplative experience.

These three theoretical positions provide a brief overview of the similarities and differences between this project’s understanding of contemplative interrelational experience and that of other integral and contemplative education theorists. While this study acknowledges the intersubjective experience that can arise in contemplation and the way this can result in the practitioner’s sense of connection with their practice group, the wider community and the environment, these aspects of interrelationality are not its primary focus. Rather it looks to an elemental ecological substrate and process, indicated by the co-researchers’ interrelational experience, which, it suggests, founds learning through contemplation.

This examination of the interrelational in the intermediary phase of *learning feelings* illustrates the way that this project has been led by the phenomenologies of the co-researchers’ contemplative experience. In this stage, they began to make cognitive meaning of their pre-predicative and somatic interrelational experience. This started for many of them with the examination of their sense of the permeability or ecology of their bodies that resulted for many in the realisation of their true self. These experiences lent a sense of stability to their passage through the interior where they moved into deeper layers of themselves to engage a ubiquitous interrelationality. This happened in both individual and group contemplation, and led to a cognitive stage where a number of the co-researchers began to question the way they understood their relations with themselves and others.

In summary

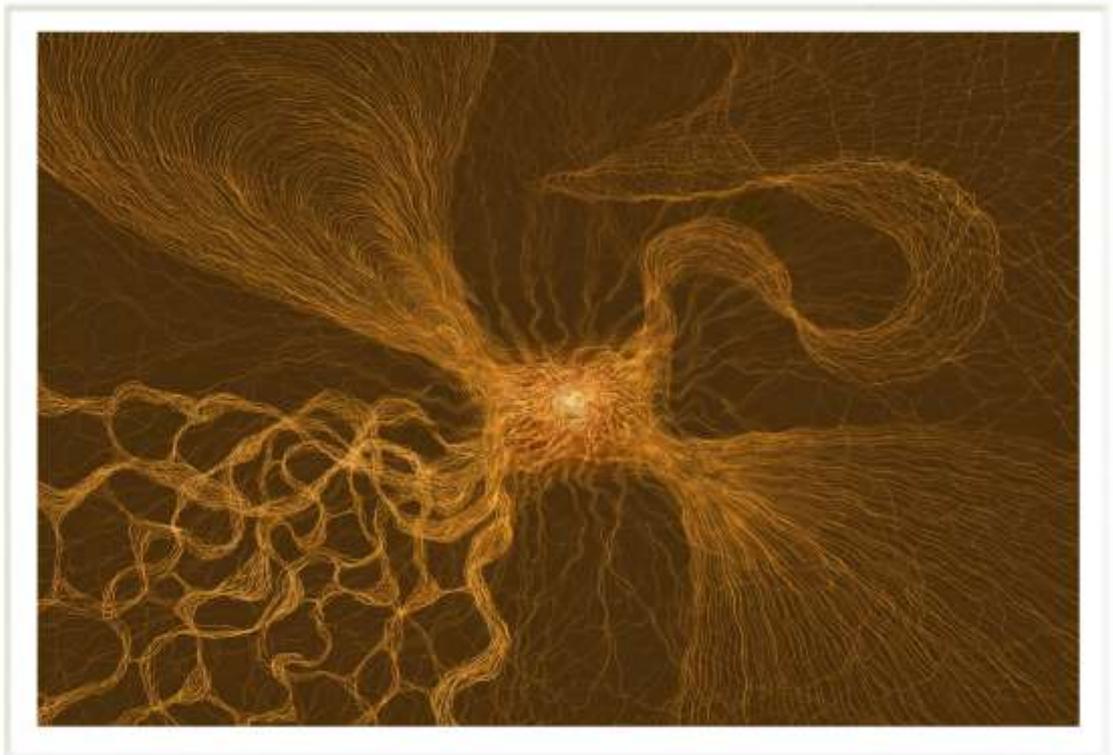
This investigation of the intermediary phase of *learning feelings* has highlighted the intersection of the pre-predicative, somatic and cognitive aspects of learning in contemplation. In this transitional phase the co-researchers moved between these aspects, often using metaphor to describe what they were *feeling* and why it was relevant for them. They spoke of knowing without their minds, with their body-minds and simply with their minds or cognitively. Although the co-researchers shifted between these three ways of knowing, before making partial or direct cognitive meaning, aspects of extra-rational meaning making were always present. This pre-figurative aspect of learning was examined with second and third wave transformative education theory and followed by an analysis of a permeable aspect of cognition. It was developed through phenomenological and Yogic conceptions of the interrelational nature of the mind. Its interrelationality was shown, not only to provide for the intersection of the pre-predictive, somatic and cognitive ways of knowing, but to suggest the presence of the interweaving activities of the *feeling nexus*.

A common feature of this stage of *learning feelings* was the co-researchers' realisation of a 'true self'. At this point their awareness of the 'mineness' of the inner space and its processes reassured them. However, their sense of meeting their true self paradoxically led at times to a loss of ego-consciousness and their *feeling* of being permeable. This was often followed by interrelational experience, and resulted from both individual and collective contemplative practice. Similarly to their realisation of the true self, encounters with this interrelationality led to a sense of interconnection with others and the world around them. Both allowed them to start explaining, initially to themselves, what had previously been difficult to 'word'. Using a *felt language* they started to make meaning as they moved between pre-predicative, somatic and cognitive experience. Some of the co-researchers didn't describe it beyond the pre-figurative and somatic, while others created meaning in an engagement with all three.

Despite the different ways they made meaning in this stage, each reinforced their learning through contemplation. Their *feeling* then 'wording' of these contemplative experiences supported the educational experiences of many of the co-researchers and led others to question and change aspects of their lives. They integrated both minor and

significant changes in their lives, ranging from altering their diets to changing their jobs and fundamental values. Although it requires regular contemplative experience to maintain the state of consciousness that supports these changes, it seems remarkable that practices, unaided by technology, which simply quieten the mind and still the body, can have such profound effects in peoples' lives. The following chapter continues this examination of meaning making in its investigation of the last and most directly cognitive phase of *learning feelings*.

Chapter Eight: *Learning Feelings*: Direct Cognitive Meaning Making



Cameron-Beau Wylie-Foster, 2013

I find, in my yoga community, people talking about things that are much more important, and they're concerned about living what they believe rather than just being able to study it. They actually think about, 'Well if I believe in peace in the world, how do I act when I'm confronted? 'How do I control my own aggressive tendencies or my own reactive tendencies?' It's very different because it's taken from abstract to concrete. (Interview with Hannah, 22nd November, 2009)

The questioning of one's ethical engagement in the world, which Hannah describes above, illustrates what I have termed 'direct' cognitive meaning making. It is the focus of this chapter and completes the *learning feelings* process. In the transitional phase outlined in the previous chapter, the co-researchers moved between *feelings* and cognition, whereas in this more directly cognitive stage, they translated their *feelings* and the metaphor they used to describe them, cognitively, as they integrated the new meanings they were making into their daily lives.

This chapter is divided into two sections; the first discusses metacognition, and the second, values-based outcomes of this last stage of *learning feelings*. Metacognition is a central focus, as this awareness that can arise in contemplation provides a clear example of the cognitive meaning making that co-researchers experienced. This state of 'witnessing' is investigated through Yogic and psychological definitions and followed by propositions that metacognition can interrupt negative patterns of conditioned thinking and lead to the development of insight and educational skills. Next, a specific form of metacognition, termed 'breakthrough awareness', illustrates the creativity and problem solving that can result from contemplation. The section on metacognition closes by examining co-researchers' metacognitive experiences to further illuminate this last stage of *learning feelings*. The second section concerns values-based outcomes of contemplative practices. A brief overview of these outcomes is followed by an analysis of a permeable form of transcendence. It is suggested that the interrelationality of this mode of being led some co-researchers to a sense of permeating and being permeated by something 'bigger' than themselves. A number of the co-researchers then reflected on this experience and in some cases began to question the absence of a spiritual or

religious dimension to their lives. An examination of this aspect of *learning feelings*, which is titled ‘Looking into the God-shaped hole’, concludes the chapter.²⁰³

This last stage of cognitive change describes the most visible results of the *feeling nexus* process, and is frequently the focus of psychology, education and neuroscience and meditation research. Plus, it is the most readily grasped by those experiencing and observing it. However, it is important to remember that this stage of learning through contemplation is founded on pre-figurative and somatic experience of the ecological interior and its processes.

Metacognition

Metacognition is important in processes of meaning making because it provides a vantage point from which to witness and reflect on the immediacy of experience. The witness consciousness was first introduced in Chapter Two where it was found to mediate perception of the ecological body. In Chapter Five the witness was shown to be a condition of the ground-of-being and to play an important role in wellbeing and education. This chapter emphasises its place in education through an examination of the enhanced metacognitive abilities that can arise in contemplative education. Pedagogical reflection on metacognition can be found in the transformative theorist Jack Mezirow’s (1991) conception of meaning making. Mezirow suggests that meaning changes through a series of stages, one of which is the learners’ critical reflection on their ‘meaning schemes’, which can be understood as a form of metacognition. Deliberating on these ‘meaning schemes’ or “structures of habitual expectations” (Mezirow 1991, p. 167) can result in learners experiencing the final stage in his schema, which is perspective transformation. This involves the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to “constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world” (ibid.). While the central focus and approach of this project is quite different to Mezirow’s, I did find that the co-researchers progressed through a series of stages in the new meanings they made through contemplation.

²⁰³ I became aware of this phrase after hearing Veronica Brady’s (2008) presentation on her *The God-shaped hole: Responding to the good news in Australia*.

Roger, a meditation teacher in Los Angeles, described the cognitive shift he experienced in his meaning schemes as “not responding in these sorts of automated ways...The relationship to desire changes, so desires don’t overwhelm you so much. What you want changes. What you consider important changes. Your capacity to love changes” (Interview, 15th October, 2009). Roger and other co-researchers learnt through their practices to unravel the compound of present moment experience, define its components, see links, derive meaning and assess possible strategies for action. Baden, a Yoga Psychology student, described her realisation that she had a choice about the way she reacted in difficult situations:

you have to just choose to let it go, or sometimes you just wait until you don’t feel that anger anymore. But you don’t realise sometimes it’s just a conscious effort to say that it’s not going to affect me anymore. I guess Yoga kind of incorporates that. And it helps me see the reasons for my old negative *saṃskāras*²⁰⁴ (psychic imprints on the subconscious). (Interview, 10th December, 2009)

Metacognitive processes like those described by Baden and Roger are defined by Glyn Rimmington and Mara Alagic as “people’s abilities to monitor their own thinking and levels of understanding...[to transfer] learning to new contexts” (2008, p. 95). The capacity to witness one’s experience has long been acknowledged in Yoga, where the witness consciousness is termed the *draṣṭri* or Seer. It is a state of pure awareness that underpins the empirical self (Feuerstein 2008, p. 4) out of which three commonly experienced states of consciousness can arise - waking consciousness (*jāgrat*), dreaming (*svapna*) and dreamless sleep (*suṣupti*).

Recent contemplative education theory investigating metacognitive consciousness (Hart 2008; Morley 2009; Repetti 2010) also describes a witnessing aspect that can arise in contemplation. Philosopher and contemplative educator Rick Repetti describes contemplative practices as “metacognitive attention-training exercises” (2010, p. 13). Going ‘meta’, he claims, is “reflecting on the mental processes involved while engaged in the activity” (Repetti 2010, p. 8). While this project also acknowledges the somatic,

²⁰⁴ Baden’s use of the Sanskrit term *saṃskāra* to mean negative thought patterns illustrates the way a number of the co-researchers integrated Yogic concepts into their new understandings of themselves.

affective and transcendent forms of reflection involved in going meta, it agrees that metacognition is the simultaneous experiencing and ‘witnessing’ of that experience. Hart (2008) describes metacognition as a process that enables the practitioner to interrupt automatic patterns of conditioned thinking, sensing and behaving. Students who are able to shift from the sense of themselves as entangled in their ego to a witness-consciousness are able to examine the confluence of thoughts, sensory input, reactions and subjective data that combine in the I-consciousness. Doing this may lead to increased clarity, equanimity, tolerance and empathy toward themselves and others. Casey, a student at Ramapo College, simply describes metacognition as being able to “see things more clearly, you know, get a grasp of what’s underlying the situation” (Interview, 12th November, 2009).

The ex-director of Integral Psychology at CIIS Brant Cortright (2007) outlines the way that contemplation can lead to metacognitive awareness. He suggests that the settling of the mind, which results from focusing bare attention on the flow of experience, allows the ‘mind space’ to reveal the presence of the witness consciousness. The move inwards through contemplation frees the mind of its “absorption in externalities and purely physical realities” (Cortright 2007, p.160). This unlinking from the exterior is not a purely cognitive process, for it also requires somatic focus (Feuerstein 2008). What can then occur is a “non-defensive attitude of interest and curiosity” (Hart 2008, p. 243), which supports the practitioner to disengage from unhelpful patterns of conditioned thinking. The unravelling of these thought patterns can lead to heightened levels of tolerance that support awareness of multiple viewpoints and is characteristic of higher-order cognitive functioning (Hart 2008, p. 244).

The development of any type of metacognition is useful for students, though there is an expanded form termed ‘breakthrough awareness’ that highlights the value of contemplation in education. This metacognition, which is sometimes described as the ‘ah ha’ moment or a ‘brainwave’, represents the creativity, insight and clarity that is sought in education. While it can occur without contemplation, it appears that breakthrough awareness is more easily facilitated by it. In his description of his meditation practice, Neville, a Sanskrit student at LMU, spoke of this sudden change in his awareness:

I was focusing up here [points between his eyebrows], and there was once again some problem I was concerned about, and suddenly it was like a door opened and I saw it from a completely different point of view. So sometimes that can happen, a whole different perspective, that's more based on reality than the sort of contracted position that your mind has been taking, can present itself. (Interview, 2nd November, 2009)

It appears that the deep focus of contemplation provides both this sudden realisation and the more gradual shifts in meaning making described earlier. These higher-order forms of cognition are useful for students, helping them to challenge negative thought patterns, problem solve and develop creative approaches in their academic and personal lives.

The co-researchers' reports of meaning making

The stilling of the mind helps you *see* what you are *feeling*. (Interview with Baden, 10th December, 2009)

In her succinct definition of metacognition, Baden outlines why she thinks contemplation works. Although it is brief, she sets out the way that her yoga practice supported the new meaning she made. After describing how Yoga helped her *feel* and *see* she then spoke of the impacts of this metacognitive. She said, "now I can see how toxic some emotions are and how bad it is for your psyche, just having all of these emotions in you that you should, like, cleanse yourself of. I think Yoga can really help with that" (ibid.). Baden's *feeling*, *revealing* and *naming* of these *feelings* occurred for many of the co-researchers, and each are important aspects of this stage of cognitive change in the *learning feelings* process. As Catherine, a yoga student and teacher in Los Angeles said, "you need to notice it for something to change, Yoga has allowed me to put into perspective my experience that otherwise would have gone unnamed" (Interview, 12th October, 2009). She continued:

Things were happening that I didn't understand but I could see they were beneficial. I'd had a very unhealthy lifestyle before I started, and I just kind of woke up one day and said, 'Oh I need to stop drinking alcohol and I need to stop

smoking’, and I stopped eating red meat, you know, and I just made a lot of changes. So I felt better physically and then I started asking some of the other questions, and then I started feeling better emotionally. (ibid.)

A number of the co-researchers spoke of the importance of developing a regular contemplative practice to support the often incremental changes they were making. Sharon, a student at LMU, expressed her initial surprise when she realised how she had altered, “I didn’t really notice it, and then one day I was driving to work and I was smiling, and I was like Wow, I haven’t really smiled in a while, cause I was going through a difficult breakup and everything” (Interview, 16th November, 2009). Isabella at Ramapo College spoke of seeing differences in her yoga students who practised regularly:

They start to know what to do for themselves, to calm themselves down, to make themselves feel better and just something simple, like going from really anxious to being moderately anxious [she laughs], you know for some people that’s a really big transformation. And then, you know, it becomes more of a life-changing thing where people start changing the way they eat and all of that, then some of the philosophy starts kicking in. They start looking at the *gunas*: *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattva*, and they aim to be in a *sattvic* state as much as possible. So if they get the idea that they want to feel balanced, is a whopper junior and a chocolate shake from Burger King going to make them feel balanced, or is it going to make them feel lousy? (Interview, 24th November, 2009)

Tim, a yoga student in Los Angeles, described a pivotal aspect of the metacognitive process he went through when recovering from a potentially fatal kidney disease. After consulting a number of medical specialists he decided to take up yoga and meditation and quite quickly began to see its benefits. Through his practice he said he realised that the ‘power of his mind’ had caused his illness, for he saw how his decision to engage contemplative practices had prompted his recovery. As he said, “I figured that if we can make ourselves ill with our minds then we ought to at least be able to have a positive impact on our body with our minds” (Interview, 3rd November, 2009). Tim’s story and those of other co-researchers outlined in this chapter highlight the different aspects of this cognitive stage of the *learning feelings* process. However, it is important to

remember that while the focus here is on cognitive meaning making, it is underpinned by the pre-predicative and somatic, including engagement with the *feeling nexus* and the elemental substrate it resides in.

Outcomes of metacognitive awareness and other positive impacts of contemplation

In his investigation of metacognition and meditation, Hart describes similar outcomes to the co-researchers, claiming that the “openness, curiosity, and flexibility toward what we are observing is characteristic of great learners and deep learning” (2008, p. 244). He also observes that contemplative practice is not only designed to provide these short-term state changes but that it can be a means to “cultivate more generalized long-term traits, such as compassion or detachment” (ibid.). Hart suggests that these claims related to the immediate meta-awareness and long-term self-awareness that can continue after contemplative practice are supported by neurobiological data.

Neuroscience and meditation research

In Hart’s (2008) exploration of the neurophenomenology of contemplation he focuses on the neuroscience research of Ljubomir Aftanas and Semen Golosheykin (2005). In their analysis of EEG data from 25 age-matched *Sahaja Yoga* meditators they found increased *alpha* and *theta* activity during meditation. This brainwave activity is associated with enhanced creative performance and concentration, and increased vigilance and attention (Aftanas & Golosheykin 2005, p. 903). Aftanas and Golosheykin also discovered that their participant’s metacognitive ability continued beyond the meditation practice. Based on this research, they propose that the increased *alpha* and *theta* activity they found is linked with higher brain functioning and indicative of internally directed mental tasks such as visualisation. They describe the state of consciousness that resulted from the meditation practice they observed as ‘mental silence’, which was indicated by the type of brainwave functioning they recorded. This mental silence is a state in which practitioners are able to keep “allocating attentional resources internally in order to inhibit irrelevant information” (Aftanas & Golosheykin 2005, p. 904). In other words, meditators can maintain focus beyond the meditation practice and potentially gain the benefits of meditation.

As a part of their research, Aftanas and Golosheykin's (2005) showed four short video clips – three that were emotionally neutral and one emotionally negative – to the *Sahaja Yoga* meditators and a control group. They found that the meditators displayed EEG signs of lower tonic arousal, which indicates a lowered stress response and the tendency for internalised attention or focus. Essentially they were less reactive than members of the control group. As Aftanas and Golosheykin claim, “heavier emotional impact on the controls is supported by self-reported ratings showing that the controls versus meditators manifested significantly higher rates of emotional arousal for negative emotions of anger, anxiety, disgust, and contempt” (2005, p. 905). These findings are significant in many areas of endeavour but it can be argued that they are particularly so in education, because lower reactivity can counter some of the current problems faced in education, such as low impulse control, distractibility, violence in the playground and the inability to sustain attention (Hart 2008, p. 244).

In her discussion of the new field of Mind, Brain and Education (MBE), Boba Samuels claims that “[t]he success of MBE stands to have wide-ranging positive impacts on classroom pedagogies and curriculum, on special education, on the development of graduate education programming and graduate neuroscience programming, and even on scientific agencies and education ministries” (2009, p. 53). Although the neuroscience and mediation research underpinning MBE has approximately a 60-history (Lutz et al, 2007(b)), its findings have only recently been integrated into contemplative education. Some of this research is disseminated in Dean Blevin's (2011) investigation of neuroscience and religious education; Michael Ferrari's (2011) presentation of 'educational neuroscience' and its aims to illustrate the embodiment of knowledge; Denis Francesconi's (2009) phenomenological and cognitive science investigation of first-person experience in education; Casey Helber, Nancy Zook and Mathew Immergut's (2012) findings related to impacts of meditation on cognitive functioning in the classroom; Sarah Lazar and her colleagues' (2005) brain plasticity and meditation research; Lisa Napora's (2011) overview of meditation research in medicine, psychology and contemplative education; Fred Travis and his colleague's (2002) EEG research with long-term transcendental meditators, which supports Aftanas and Golosheykin's propositions outlined above; Rick Repetti's (2010) case for a contemplative philosophy of education that engages 'contemplative neuroscience'; and

Francis Schrag's (2011) critique of the role of neuroscience in learning and education. This and other neuroscience and meditation research is increasingly being used by contemplative education theorists and pedagogues to support their claims for the benefits of contemplative education.

Pedagogical and psychological research

This neuroscience research supports current pedagogical and psychological inquiry that is advancing contemplative education. In their review of meditation in higher education, educational theorists Shauna Shapiro, Kirk Brown and John Astin (2011) present empirical and quantitative evidence from educational psychology research. Their *Toward the integration of meditation into higher education: A review of research evidence* has been chosen here to highlight research into the benefits of meditation in education because it is current, builds on their previous review of 2008 and has a holistic approach. Other reviews don't cover this range. David Black and his colleagues' (2009) appraisal of contemplative education primarily focuses on young people aged between 6 and 18; the overview by Michael Murphy et al. (2004) emphasises the historical background of this research area; while Patricia Jennings's (2008) examination of new directions in contemplative education specifically contrasts findings related to young people and adults.

In their review, Shapiro et al. outline a number of ways that meditation can complement traditional academic skills as well as help "build important affective and interpersonal capacities that foster psychological well-being and the development of the "whole person" (2011, p. 494). Their findings support the co-researchers' reports of the benefits of meditation, particularly in the areas of enhanced academic performance, stress and anxiety management, and the sense of wholeness or integration that many described. Shapiro and her colleagues define the latter as a 'larger goal' of education, and while their focus doesn't reach to foundational aspects of the integrative forces underpinning contemplation, which is the focus of this project, they highlight, as I do, the importance of "interpersonal skills, emotional balance, and other forms of "intelligence"" (2011, p. 496). Like this project, they critique the emphasis in mainstream education on the cognitive and objective, arguing that, "balanced education cultivates abilities beyond the verbal and conceptual to include matters of heart,

character, creativity, self-knowledge, concentration, openness and mental flexibility” (ibid.). In addition to their call for the integration of these abilities into mainstream education, Shapiro and her colleagues confirm the importance of contemplative knowing, which they claim is a method and mode of knowing that addresses the larger goals of education.

In their review of four decades of empirical evidence, Shapiro et al. (2011) detail a wide range of benefits attributed to contemplation in education. They divide their overview of these findings into three ‘rationales’: The Effects of Meditation on Cognitive and Academic Performance, The Effects of Meditation on Mental Health and Psychological Well-being, and The Effects of Meditation on Development of the Whole Person.²⁰⁵ The proposed benefits outlined in these three areas are detailed by a range of educational theorists, including Robert Altobello’s (2007) introduction of a model of contemplative pedagogy which can enhance the development of academic skills; Heeson Bai, Charles Scott and Beatrice Donald’s (2009) exploration of the holistic impacts of contemplative education; Richard Brady’s (2007) examination of contemplative mathematics education and the benefits of including a wide variety of contemplative practices for enhanced energy and stress reduction before tests; Jonathan Campion and Sharn Rocco’s (2009) investigation of a meditation program in 31 Catholic schools, which found that it represents an effective mental health promotion intervention; Robert Cranson et al.’s (1991) two-year study of the outcomes of participation in university courses that feature a twice-daily TM meditation practice, which resulted in improvements in measures related to general intelligence; Robert Fisher’s (2006) case for the use of meditation with children based on his proposal that it provides the conditions for generative thinking and reflection; Fran Grace’s (2011) exploration of contemplative education students’ personal narratives, which she believes demonstrate their development of self-knowledge and ethical behaviour; John Gravios’s (2005) investigation of metacognition and meditation; Robert Haight’s (2010) integration of the principle of *ahimsa* or non-harming into his pedagogy, which revealed that his students felt more ‘whole’ and engaged, and that the imagination and compassion of both students and teachers were heightened; Tobin Hart’s (2008)

²⁰⁵ Tobin Hart (2008) has also developed a schema for the benefits of contemplation, which he divides into four aspects of interiority: ‘Presence, Attention, Focus, and Flow’; ‘Silence, Imagination, Creativity, Clarity’; ‘Detachment, Witnessing, Metacognition’; and ‘Resilience, Emotional Balance, Well-Being’.

identification of the neuro-physiologic substrates of four dimensions of consciousness related to learning which he believes are enhanced by contemplation; Clifford Hill's (2006) overview of a seminal contemplative education conference at Columbia University describing a wide range of benefits; Robyn Lynn's (2010) investigation of mindfulness in social work education, in which she describes it as a practice that opens the student to a 'deeper dimension' of learning; John Miller's (1994) description of his contemplative pedagogy, including proposals for the benefits of contemplative pedagogy in language, science and fine arts courses; Dough Orman et al.'s (2008) evaluation of an eight-week MBSR course with students, which found those who finished the course experienced reduced stress and enhanced forgiveness; Leonard Riskin's (2002) suggestions for the benefits of mindfulness practices in law education and practice; Steven Rucker's (2006) examination of the progressive social change that can result from the integration of meditation in American undergraduate colleges; Robert Roeser and Stephen Peck's (2009) exploration of relations between self and identity, motivation to learn and self-regulated learning through contemplative education; Steven Rosenzweig et al.'s (2003) psychological study of MBSR as an educational intervention with medical students that showed this program alleviated stress, anxiety and fatigue, and enhanced vigour and activity; Ed Sarath's (2003, 2006) overview of his 'creativity consciousness studies' which outlines the positive role of 'first-person' experience in contemplative education; Robert Thurman's (2006) exploration of meditation in the development of a 'genuinely humanistic education'; Joseph Tloczynski and Michelle Tantriella's (1998) research using Zen breath meditation to support students' adjustment to college. This study showed that after six weeks, anxiety, depression and interpersonal problems decreased for the group of students practicing meditation compared to the control group; Betsy Wisner et al.'s (2010) review of literature highlighting the benefits of school-based meditation practices, such as enhanced academic and psychological strengths and improved self-regulation; and Arthur Zajonc's (2006(b)) discussion of his rationale for the inclusion of contemplative practices in his courses at Amherst College which suggests this has led to student transformation.

Effects of meditation on cognitive and academic performance

The primary finding in the first area or rationale of Shapiro et al.'s (2011) review is that meditation can positively impact academic performance. Much of the mediation and education research underpinning this proposition suggests that engaging contemplative practices can increase the ability to focus attention and process information. As Shapiro et al. claim, "it is not surprising research has begun to suggest that meditative practices can, in fact, enhance specific aspects or subsystems of attention in task contexts" (2011, p. 498). However, despite these benefits and the importance of the ability to focus in learning, there is rarely systematic training for it in educational settings. This paradox is one of the central issues that contemplative theorists are working to address, primarily because many of these practices are based on attentional training.

The attentional focus that can result from contemplation supports information processing, a complex form of cognition, which is frequently linked with intelligence. This ability to focus on, remember and mentally manipulate information is considered a cornerstone of cognitive and academic performance. Experimental psychologists Kam-Tim So and David Orme-Johnson (1991) have conducted significant research related to cognitive capacity and meditation. They developed a series of experiments with students practising TM to assess its impacts on information processing and measures of intelligence in high school students. They found that the participants who received TM training and meditated for 15 to 20 minutes a day for a year were significantly better at processing information than the members of the control group (Shapiro et al. 2011). This was further supported by the TM and education research of Robert Cranson et al. (1991) which compared 154 Chinese high school students who practised TM twice a day, with 58 who slept, and 56 in a control group. After six months, it was found that the students practising meditation were significantly better at processing information than both the sleeping students and those in the control group. While more research needs to be conducted, these and other research findings provide support for the thesis that contemplation enhances academic performance, particularly the ability to focus, retain and retrieve information (Hart, 2008).

Effects of meditation on mental health and psychological wellbeing

The mental health and psychological wellbeing said to result from contemplation frame Shapiro et al.'s (2011) second rationale. Much of the research in this area focuses on MBSR devised by Professor of Medicine, biomedical scientist and Zen Buddhist Jon Kabat-Zinn. The four decades of this research, which Shapiro et al. examine, provides significant evidence to support their proposition that meditation “can reduce negative mental health symptoms and enhance psychological well-being” (2011, p. 504). In an experiment where they randomised 78 medical students, Shapiro et al. (1998) investigated the impacts of an eight-week MBSR program on these students’ symptoms of anxiety. They found that there were decreased levels of anxiety and depression in the meditation group, compared to the control group, which is similar to the results of a number of the experiments described in Shapiro et al.'s (2011) review. These studies suggest that training such as MBSR enhances students’ ability to “tolerate stress, negative emotion, and other psychological symptoms...[and]...may enhance positive psychological states” (Shapiro, 2011, p. 505). Similarly, the co-researchers reported reduced stress and depression as a result of their contemplative practices, many claiming that it was the reason they continued practising.

Shapiro et al.'s findings in this area are supported by a significant and diverse range of research including the work of John Astin (1997) who remedies earlier mindfulness and wellbeing research by including appropriate control group comparisons; Kirk Brown and Ryan Richard's (2003) examination of ‘wellbeing constructs’ that differentiate mindfulness practitioners from others; James Carmody and Ruth Baer's (2008) investigation of the relations between levels of mindfulness and medical and psychological symptoms; Paul Grossman and his colleagues' (2004) meta-analysis of the health benefits of mindfulness meditation; Shamini Jain et al's (2007) comparison of mindfulness meditation and relaxation for the treatment of stress; John Miller, Karen Fletcher and Jon Kabat-Zinn's (1995) follow-up study of MBSR interventions in the treatment of anxiety disorders; Ivan Nyklíček and Karlin Kuijpers's (2008) analysis of the mediating effects of mindfulness for individuals suffering stress and anxiety; and Shauna Shapiro, Kirk Brown and Gina Biegel's (2007) research into the use of MBSR to alleviate stress for trainee mental health therapists. These scientists' work in the area of contemplative practice, mental health and psychological wellbeing provides a brief

overview of research in this area, supports claims for the benefits of meditation in education and confirms the co-researchers reports' of the health benefits of contemplation.

Effects of meditation on the development of the 'whole person'

The last rationale of Shapiro et al.'s (2011) review is what they term the development of the 'whole person', which they claim is founded on the self-awareness that can arise in contemplation. Pedagogical development of this awareness was once a goal in a liberal arts education (Astin 2004) because it is a skill that enables students to understand themselves in relations to others. However, the growing cognocentric emphasis in mainstream education has meant that, "we have increasingly come to neglect our 'inner' development – the sphere of values and beliefs, emotional maturity, moral development, spirituality, and self-understanding (Astin 2004, p. 34). While research in this area is not as developed as the other two rationales in Shapiro et al's review, it does suggest that pedagogical engagement with the whole person is important for education. The 'whole-student' approach is understood to support "creative expression, social skills, and other psychological strengths and virtues...[plus it]... may enhance learning and healthy learning climates" (Shapiro et al. 2011, p. 506). A holistic conception of the student is encouraged in contemplative education as it often seeks to include creative expression, other ways of knowing including the somatic and contemplative, positive social relations, empathy for one's self and others, and social action (Shapiro et al. 2011).

Research into the emergence of the whole person in contemplation is focused in three areas in Shapiro et al's review: creativity, interpersonal relations and empathy and self-compassion. With the first, Shapiro and her colleagues (2011) introduce recent research which suggests meditation may promote creativity. They emphasise the need to encourage creativity in education because the traits of a creative individual include perceptual skills, ideational fluency, openness to experience and emotional flexibility (Csikszentmihályi in Shapiro et al. 2011, p. 507). Shapiro and her colleagues return to the work of So and Orme-Johnson (2001), who found in their TM and neuroscience research – through their use of the *Test for Creative Thinking-Drawing Production* (Jellen & Urban 1986) – that students who practised TM had significantly higher levels

of creativity than students in the non-treatment and control groups (Shapiro et al. 2011, p. 507). In interpersonal relationship function, Shapiro et al.'s (2011) second area of 'whole-person' research, they suggest that the meta-awareness, which can develop through meditation, may provide the less reactive states that support the cultivation of empathy, compassion and a sense of trust and closeness with others. Shapiro et al. claim that these outcomes promote the development of positive interpersonal behaviour, which they emphasise with their statement that, "meditation may foster not only day-to-day interpersonal functioning but also adaptive responses to social conflict" (2011, p. 508). These skills can encourage wellbeing through the sense of closeness and belonging that arises from interrelational experiences in contemplation, and can support the development of healthy learning environments (ibid.).

Empathy and compassion for one's self and others is the third area of 'whole person' and mediation research examined by Shapiro and her colleagues. Although it is a relatively new area of study, Richard Davidson's (2004) neuroscience research with Buddhist monks appears to verify the increase in empathy and self-compassion that can arise in contemplation. Davidson suggests that activity in the prefrontal cortex specific to meditators is indicative of increased compassion. This activity in the cortex relates to the relative activation of the left compared to the right prefrontal cortex, which reflects differences in emotional responsiveness (Hart, 2008). Davidson claims that, "greater relative activity on the left side seems to correspond to 'positive' emotional states (joy, empathy, caring, etc.), as opposed to anxiety, depression, and the like, and greater emotional resilience" (Davidson in Hart 2008, p. 246). This is confirmed in Davidson's research with Buddhist monks practising a compassion meditation, which showed a greater shift in left-frontal cortex activity than the participants without meditation experience (Hart 2008).

These and other findings introduced in this section provide an overview of the physiological and psychological benefits of contemplation, which are the more obvious outcomes of contemplation and in that sense the most easily grasped cognitively. The positive impacts of meditation practices, such as heightened academic performance – including increased attention, ability to focus, retain and retrieve information, greater ability to process information, stress and anxiety reduction, increased psychological wellbeing, and benefits related to the development of the whole person, including

increased creativity, interpersonal skills, empathy and self-compassion – are described in the Garrison Institute’s report of contemplation in education as the “ingredients of a healthy school community” (Schoeberlein et al. 2005, p. 8). Both this neuroscience and psychological research, and the co-researchers’ reports, deliver powerful evidence for the integration of contemplative practices in education.

Values-based outcomes

This chapter now returns to findings drawn from the co-researchers’ interviews. Analysis of these interviews indicated that their contemplative experience often led to questioning of their personal values. For some this resulted in minor changes to their value systems, and for others, major changes to the ethical foundations of their lives. The examination of this phenomenon in the following section starts with the co-researchers questioning their lifestyles. Many sought answers in the philosophies underpinning their practices, which were primarily Buddhist and Yogic. The co-researchers emphasised the need for the embodied element of their practices and the authenticity of their teachers and the philosophies underpinning these practices. Their desire for genuine experiences often resulted in them leaving secular classes and moving to groups where they felt their spiritual and ethical values were supported. The soundness of the co-researchers’ decision to move to other groups was confirmed by experiences they had in their new contemplative practice communities, such as the *felt* sense of an interrelationality in collective practice, which was cemented in discussions with members of their groups. Following this discussion of ‘the authentic’ is an investigation of other positive outcomes such as the development of intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, the cultivation of empathy for others and development of self-compassion. This section concludes with an exploration of the God-shaped-hole experience. This questioning of the absence of spiritual or religious experience in their lives commonly occurred for co-researchers who had a regular contemplative practice.

The questions they asked about a missing spiritual dimension, plus those related to their values and beliefs, formed a part of the co-researchers’ quest for meaning which often arose from their contemplative practices. Ken Otter spoke about this stage for his graduate students in leadership studies at St Marys College, describing the way he uses

contemplative methods to help them ‘drop down’ into an awareness of their unconscious patterns or beliefs. Outlining this process he said:

We have a certain mindset or consciousness that has us notice things or register certain parts of life or not, and then that perception of life is unconscious and we layer all of this other stuff on top of it. So if I can help people drop down and look at how that was put together then they can make choices, and in the process of doing that they can intervene along the way by not doing something, or doing something differently, thinking something different, asking for help, or whatever. Then as they make changes, their consciousness changes, and they start to notice different stuff, so it’s a really iterative process. (Interview, 6th November, 2009)

Catherine in Los Angeles spoke of a similar process in which she developed an awareness of her imbedded thought patterns, describing it as part of a natural progression in her contemplative practice. She found that as a result of doing yoga and meditation she was gradually changing the way she understood herself and engaged in the world. She said that these shifts happened when she began to understand how “to use the tools off the mat” (Interview, 12th October, 2009). The ‘tools’ here are Yoga’s physical practices and its philosophy. In our interview, she described initially changing what she saw as negative or unhelpful aspects of her lifestyle, which eventually led her to train as a Yoga teacher. An important aspect of her taking the tools off the mat was her integration of the yoga practices and its philosophy:

I need the intellectual and the physical, that’s where the transformation comes for me. Not just from the physical or just the intellectual. If it were just intellectual all the time and there was no practice, it would just stay up here [indicates her head], for me that wouldn’t be transformative. (ibid.)

Catherine’s need to move between the experiential and philosophical to support the changes she made is reflected in the way that James Morley shifted between different modes of consciousness in his Yoga practice. He described applying a ‘gestalt switch’ which allowed him to transition between contemplative and ‘ordinary’ awareness. He said, “I need to switch back and forth. I think that’s how I’ve learned as I go back and

forth” (Interview, 19th November, 2009). He believes passing between these two forms of consciousness supported the integration of his contemplative experiences into his daily life. He also applied this method to his Yoga Psychology course by giving his students the opportunity to experience both the theoretical and experiential. This helped the students engage more fully in his course, as their growing familiarity with Yoga philosophy helped them understand their somatic and pre-theoretical experiences and vice versa.

The impacts of this integrated pedagogy can be seen in Morley’s students’ adoption of Yogic terms. Anne, a Yoga Psychology student, described her understanding of *saṃtoṣa*, saying, “it means the feeling of being happy, I think I need to do this more often. I know that when I try really hard to get something, then don’t get everything I worked for, I become unhappy. But I should be happy with what I get” (Interview, 15th December, 2009). In Baden’s description of the way the course was affecting her, she linked Yogic concepts with biblical ones she was more familiar with:

It’s definitely made me do more like, critical thinking. I think because of that I’m becoming, like a better version of myself? I guess it’s like I’m using the different terminologies, like the *niyamas* and the *yamas*. It’s kind of like...it reminds me of the Ten Commandments. (Interview, 10th December, 2009)

Authenticity

As mentioned earlier, a significant aspect of this stage of *learning feelings* for Morley’s students, and many of the other co-researchers, was their questioning of the authenticity of their practices. As a result some shifted from secular classes, such as gym-based yoga, to ones that had philosophical and spiritual foundations. They then felt that their practices were founded on genuine and ethical doctrines, which helped them live more ‘authentically’. Agnes, a Yoga teacher in Los Angeles, spoke of the need to find a teacher who was “actually on the path” (Interview, 9th October, 2009) as opposed to those who teach you – as Baden said “just the exercising part of it” (10th December, 2009). Casey, a Yoga teacher and student at Ramapo, outlined her need for authenticity in her practice and teachers. She spoke of one of her first teachers Alice Christianson,

who developed the seminal *Easy Does It Yoga Program* in the USA in the 1960s. She emphasised that Christianson came from a ‘very spiritual place’, and said:

So there’s these people who have been doing it for a long, long time, they have been looking at it in terms of how it can benefit society, mentally, emotionally, and physically. Instead of just like making them beautiful and everything, which is what you see a lot of now. Like the DVD that one of my students brought me the other day called *Yoga, Boody, Ballet!* (Interview, 12th December, 2009)

Long-term contemplative practitioners like Casey and Agnes understood that they were living what they described the ‘Yoga life’. Similarly, Hannah in New Jersey described using Patanjali’s *Yoga Sūtras* to help direct her choices, because they were a type of ‘moral code’. She explained that they provided her with directions for the ‘Yoga life’, though this needed to be supported by interactions with her yoga community. She also explained that the embodied practices of yoga helped her to relate ‘Yogically’ with members of her community. She said that when you “move with people, you use a different part of your intelligence...and it creates a bond” (Interview, 22nd November, 2009). Her deep embodied sense of connection with the individuals in her group, and her use of the *Yoga Sūtras* to guide her engagement with them and others, supports her desire to engage more ethically in the world.

Values and ethics

Much of what Hannah, Catherine and others spoke of in relation to the changes in their value systems is described by Shapiro and her colleagues in their 2008 review of contemplative higher education. They are relevant for this chapter’s examination of the way that values and ethics can change through contemplation, as they confirm that meditation enhances the development of intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, and the cultivation of self-compassion (Shapiro et al. 2008, p. 4). Shapiro et al.’s findings confirm this project’s discovery of the co-researchers’ increased ability to adapt to social stress and engage positively with others. These changes, their enhanced empathy, self-compassion and interpersonal skills and the sense of integration and balance that can result from contemplation are, I suggest, what led to the modifications in the co-

researchers' ethical behaviour. As Shapiro and her colleagues stated in relation to meditation in education, it "contributes to qualities that produce the well-rounded person... [which is]...reflected in higher creativity and greater capacities for positive interpersonal behaviour and healthy social relationships" (2008, p. 23). The questioning of personal ethics and values, that can result from contemplative practice is being examined by a number of other theorists such as Sean Barnes and his colleagues (2007), who analyse the role of mindfulness meditation in relationship and relational stress; Kirk Brown and Richard Ryan's (2003) psychological wellbeing and mindfulness meditation research; James Carson et al.'s (2004) psychological investigation of the enhancement of personal relationships by mindfulness meditation; Kenneth Pargament and Patrick Sweeney's (2011) overview of contemplative practices and the development of self-awareness and values in army training; and Leonard Riskin's (2009) study of the impacts of meditation on ethical behaviour in law practice and education.

When questioning the value of contemplation in education, it is important to consider these positive impacts of contemplation in the *learning feelings* process. This chapter's examination of that process, and descriptions of its results in practitioners' lives, is supported by Robert Roeser and Stephen Peck's (2009) definition of contemplative education. These educational philosophers characterise it as a "set of pedagogical practices designed to cultivate the potentials of mindful awareness and volition in an ethical-relational context in which the values of personal growth, learning, moral living and caring for others are also nurtured" (Roeser & Peck 2009, p. 127). A number of ways that contemplation can enhance this type of pedagogical relationship have been detailed in this chapter and in the two preceding it. Aspects of these findings, which relate to individual and collective relationality, realisation of new values and ethics and the embodied experiences that can lead to a sense of reintegration are reiterated in Robert Waxler and Maureen Hall's call for teachers to use contemplative practices to connect with their students as:

whole persons, reaching their students on an emotional as well as an intellectual level. Such teaching can be pictured as an organic process which evolves in connection to the immediate and ongoing context. We see such teaching as an embodied process...[providing]...teaching and learning modes which are capacious enough to hold heart and mind, thoughts and feelings. (2011, p. 100)

A number of the co-researchers who experienced this form of pedagogy suggested that it initiated the new (cognitive) meanings they made. Their stories of these experiences, which are detailed in this chapter, have illustrated ways that contemplative education can impact the ‘whole’ student/person, ranging from changes in their lifestyle, interpersonal and intrapersonal relations, and ethics. These outcomes produced minor and significant changes, with some of the co-researchers modifying health-related aspects of their lifestyles. Others altered the ways they engaged with their families, friends, communities of practice and Nature, while there were co-researchers who looked into the God-shaped-hole, an internal space of longing for God and/or spiritual or religious experience.

Looking into the God-shaped hole

The God-shaped-hole can be understood as an interior spiritual longing, and has been described as a condition of secular modernity (Withers 2003). This experience, along with the emergence of new spiritualities such as the New Age and hybrid ‘self-religions’,²⁰⁶ is described as “simply the re-emergence of the religious impulse in a predominately secular time (Tracey in Withers 2003, p. 195). An associated outcome of this secularism is the development of ‘invisible religions’. These are forms of religiosity that have developed since the decline of ecclesiastic religion, in which religious and spiritual expression has become a ‘private affair’ (Possamai 2008). Starting with definitions of it, this section examines an aspect of self and invisible religions, which is the God-shaped-hole experience. This spiritual longing is then described through the co-researchers’ experiences of it. Following this is an examination of a permeable form of the transcendent mode of being. It is included here as experiences of it appear to can lead to the God-shaped-hole. The section ends with a discussion of the politics of the God-shaped-hole which frames all these aspects.

²⁰⁶ Paul Heelas (1996) has proposed the term ‘self-religions’ for a number of contemporary, hybrid self-development/spiritual practices. Some of the practices he names are: Forum, Landmark, Scientology and Transcendental Meditation. In this project I extend his definition by adding the idiosyncratic and eclectic practices of the co-researchers, who combined their families’ religion, the spiritual and philosophical supports of their contemplative practices and indigenous spirituality, primarily Native American and Celtic practices.

The ‘questing’ implicit in the God-shaped-hole experience implies that this outcome of contemplation is a type of meaning making. The yearning for God (an ‘energy’, interrelational ‘space’, ‘something bigger’) defines the term ‘the God-shaped-hole’, as it was originally developed by St Augustine of Hippo. In his *Confessions* (1470), St Augustine describes a yearning or inner space empty of God, and suggests that it remains a hollow aching place in every individual until filled by God-realisation. Leading from this original understanding, the God-shaped hole is understood in a variety of ways. Public administration theorist Cheryl King (2005) has derived her understanding of the God-shaped hole from the Tiffanie De Bartolo novel of the same name. De Bartolo suggests that the “god-shaped hole in human consciousness...[is]...brought about by the “secularist bypassing of spirituality” resulting from the Enlightenment and exacerbated by postmodern conditions” (De Bartolo in King 2006, p. 531). The literary critic Blakey Vermeule (2009) posits both a religious and secular understanding, in which the former is a space or yearning for God put there by God, while the latter is a place in the mind that the non-religious examine in their search for an evolutionary reason for God (Vermeule 2011, p. 10). However, this internal space may be better known by a presence rather than an absence, as it was by the Russian novelist Anatoly Pristavkin. He spoke of the manifestation and comfort of his ‘soul’ or presence of God, despite being told that it did not exist:

Anatoly Pristavkin remembered how he and other orphans were forever shuttled about “like a flock of little animals” during the hell that was World War II in Russia...In the *Inseparable Twins* Pristavkin recalled how orphans were treated in a godless society: “The only thing we could call ours was – ourselves and our legs ever ready to run away should anything happen – and our souls, which, so we were always told, didn’t exist”. (Pristavkin/Martin 2008, p. 18)

The co-researchers’ growing awareness of something like a soul, the transcendent mode of being, an ‘energy’, ‘something bigger’, or God, led a number to question the absence of a spiritual or religious dimension in their lives. Roger, a writer and yoga teacher in Los Angeles, described his yoga students’ experience of this:

And sometimes it becomes, for many of them, a spiritual thing. It’s like, why, when I go deep within do I experience happiness and calm? What am I? Who

am I? I'm not just this? And it becomes a spiritual transformation and they change their whole relationship to the cosmos and to God. If they think in terms of God, and spirit, they realise that they have a connection to the universe that they had not experienced before and they want more of it, and it changes their lives. (Interview, 15th October, 2009)

The questions Roger outlines are the same as those the educational theorist Robert Nash (2002) calls 'life's most insistent'. He suggests that they can arise for students in pedagogical settings that become transcendent when students and teachers "take an inward journey together" (Nash 2002, p. 168). When this happens they may then ask, "What am I? Why am I? How should I act? Why should I be moral?" (Nash 2002, p. 21). Nash believes that asking these questions should be a goal of education, and that students who haven't asked them are not fully prepared to leave the educational setting.

A permeable transcendent mode of being

Developing an understanding of a permeable, ecological or interrelational form of the transcendent mode of being²⁰⁷ is important in this discussion of the God-shaped-hole, as it appears that it can lead to God-shaped-hole experiences in this stage of *learning feelings*. The co-researchers' regular encounters with 'a vastness' or another space simultaneously in and outside them are, I believe, experiences of permeable transcendence. They can be understood as transcendent or transpersonal, for the co-researchers often spoke of the sense of being 'beyond' or 'trans' themselves. This common definition of transpersonal is supplemented here with Jorge Ferrer's (2002) characterisation of the transpersonal as *across, through* and *pervaded*.

While the transpersonal and transcendent²⁰⁸ are used interchangeably here, it is the 'transcendent' (being beyond the range of human experience) that acts as a trope for the multiple ways that the co-researchers described this mode of being. Their transpersonal,

²⁰⁷ I employ the common understanding of 'transcendent' and 'transcendental' as being beyond the usual range of human experience. This is similar to Husserl's use of the term, which Dan Zahavi (2003) describes in his definition of 'transcendental objects'. These are objects, which 'show' *themselves* differently, they are "not part of my consciousness and cannot be reduced to my experience of them" (Zahavi 2003, p. 70). However these transcendentals are not inaccessible, rather they are "transcendent objects insofar as they are transcendent *for us*" (ibid.).

²⁰⁸ The transcendent can also be understood as the "richness and plasticity of consciousness" (Walsh 1993, p. 125), or an aspect of polyphasic (multiple states of) consciousness.

transcendental, transtemporal and preternatural experiences are defined by the anthropologist Charles Laughlin as “those experiences that bring the cognized-self into question” (Laughlin in Ferrer 2002, p. 196). The transpersonal can be considered ‘metaphysically neutral’ (Daniels, 2005, p. 11), though it is also often used interchangeably with ‘spiritual’. In the fieldwork for this project I discovered something similar to Jorge Ferrer in his study of the transpersonal, in which he found that while a “strict correspondence between transpersonality and spirituality cannot be maintained, the study of transpersonal phenomena led most authors to delve into the spiritual depths of human experience” (2002, p. 7). This was confirmed over the course of the fieldwork by similar suggestions from Christopher Chapple, James Morley, Cassie Vieten and other co-researchers. In this project’s development of the transpersonal it has been important to remember that the transpersonal is not a ‘leaping across’ or throwing away of one’s *self*, rather it is that which “calls us through and beyond our more familiar level of ego awareness to a critical examination of the very ground from which our behaviours, thoughts, and emotions emerge” (Valle 1989, p. 262). In the questioning of their transpersonal and transcendent experiences, many of the co-researchers applied specific spiritual or religious meaning to their experiences, while others spoke of engaging something like a supernal form of ecology, intersubjectivity or interrelationality.

Each of these aspects of transcendent experience is examined through phenomenological and Yogic understandings of a permeable transcendence, starting with the phenomenological psychologist Olga Louchakova’s (2007) work on spiritual emergence. Louchakova’s development of a ‘spiritual transcendence’ outlines a type of direct intuition in which the practitioner is able to perceive an elemental permeability which arises out of:

ego-transcendence resolving into ‘pure awareness’ (known in Yoga as *Samādhi*), the phenomenal field of consciousness subsequently endures a number of specific, permanent changes. These include the persistence of spontaneous *epoché*, and the transparency of inner space, i.e. activated direct intuition of the internal structures of consciousness”. (Louchakova 2007, p. 53)

The transparent inner space that Louchakova describes above, which can be understood as permeable transcendence, appeared in her study of mystical-religious experiences (MREs).²⁰⁹ As a psychologist she initially looked for answers in her discipline, though found that psychology's cognitive/developmental approaches to transcendent experience were inadequate. She then turned to phenomenology and, in particular, Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka's work. As she related this approach to her findings, she discovered that in MREs the quality of her participants' *beingness* changed, for in "spiritual emergence, *beingness* itself was the locus of change" (Louchakova 2007, p. 44). Reflecting on this discovery, she proposed that there is "a new quality of beingness – not a psychological quality, but rather something that in Sufism is referred to in terms of 'taste'" (Louchakova 2007, p. 47). Here Louchakova is alluding to the Sufi maxim that Sufism is a taste (*dhawq*) of the divine reality (Michon & Gaetani 2006, p. xvii). In this context, 'taste' is a direct spiritual or transcendental experience, which Jean-Louis Michon and Roger Gaetani (2006) term 'direct intellection'.

This unmediated engagement or perception is similar to Merleau-Ponty's proposition that "perception is directly of the world and unmediated by representations" (Romdenh-Romluc 2009, p. 158). This form of perception hinges on Merleau-Ponty's suggestion that action and intention are concurrently engaged, and that actions accompanying perception involve direct 'intentional' contact unmediated by representations (Romdenh-Romluc 2009). The 'direct contact' in Merleau-Ponty's theory of perception offers a secular understanding of transcendence, and is most relevant for those co-researchers who understood these experiences to be a form of supernal interrelationality. However, it is also significant for the co-researchers who applied spiritual or religious meaning to their transcendent experiences, as they were also often framed by the 'immediacy' of the experience.

In both cases this unmediated engagement can be understood as a form of permeable transcendent engagement, which is illustrated in Louchakova's description of the interrelational nature of MREs. Louchakova has found that repeated experience of this transcendence or *taste* led to her participants' awareness of a permeability, or thinning of the border between the corporeal and preternatural. While Louchakova's participants were not all engaged in contemplative practices when they experienced MREs, I would

²⁰⁹ Louchakova (2009) conducted this research over a 17-year period using 2000 accounts of MREs.

suggest that they had entered deep states of focus, and that this is what produced or revealed the pre-predicative, interrelational and immediate contact of them ‘selves’ with the world. Her findings confirm my own, in which the co-researchers’ growing familiarity with the permeable transcendent mode of being in contemplation led to their experience of moving beyond the boundaries of their bodies into, as some described it, something bigger.

In the review of her findings, Louchakova describes a path to permeable transcendence that is similar to many of the co-researchers’ passage through stages of contemplative experience and final immersion in the permeable mode of transcendence. She outlines her participants’ awareness of a focused state of consciousness which can appear after a preliminary stage where the mind generates spontaneous and chaotic thoughts and images. This is followed by their engagement with the unconscious material of the psyche, and lastly ‘pure absorption’ (Louchakova 2009). In this state one has access to the:

‘great divide’ between the manifest and unmanifest, and to witness how meaning and image both emerge in pure subjectivity. As one ‘sees’ this process, no doubt remains that the mind emerges from pure consciousness. This emergence of meaning from within is ‘quantum’, momentary. What is amazing is that consciousness generates, stays static in itself, and observes its own self-generating activity at the same time, in a single gestalt. (Louchakova 2007, p. 61)

The co-researchers’ experiences of a similar state of absorption in ‘pure awareness’, which I suggest is permeable transcendence, happened as they progressed through gradually more refined states of consciousness. Yoga understands this as their growing awareness of the presence of *Brahman*, the divine absolute, which is possible through the principle of *tadātmya* (sameness, identity of nature or character with...) (advaita.org.uk 2010). *Tadātmya* provides for the adherent’s realisation that their ‘true self’ and *Brahman* are one in the same. The theologian Reza Shah-Kazemi (2006) describes this as, “the world *qua* effect [having] the nature of its material cause, *Brahman*, but *Brahman* does not have the nature of its effect, the world” (p. 57). The adherent’s realisation, through yogic practices, of the undividedness or ‘sameness’ of

themselves and *Brahman* highlights their ‘simultaneity’, and in that sense their permeability.

A phenomenological form of simultaneity can be seen in Louchakova’s description of MREs which are the concurrent experience of ‘generation’, ‘remaining static’ and ‘observing’ (2007, p. 61). The simultaneity in this state of consciousness can be understood as a permeable or interrelational experience. It has been identified through this, and the previous accounts of the permeable forms of the somatic, affective and cognitive permeable modes of human experience, as the condition that provides their permeability. There is a reciprocal relationship between the permeable modes and the *feeling nexus*, for it appears that immersion in them can lead to the realisation of an interweaving, elemental substrate and the *feeling nexus* at work in it. While experiences of the permeable mode of the transcendent, as simultaneity or interrelationality, results, I am suggesting, from the processes of the *feeling nexus*.

Outcomes of the God-shaped hole

The meaning of the God-shaped hole I develop here incorporates its original meaning as an ‘interior yearning that is a space empty of God with the diversity of the co-researchers’ experiences. These include their reflections on the absence of spirituality or religion in their lives, their focus on the re-embodiment they experienced through somatic contemplative practices, and their participation in the spiritual and religious foundations of their secular contemplative practices.²¹⁰ Episcopalian Minister and psychiatrist Scott Peck describes this as the ambiguity of the God-shaped-hole experience, in which practitioners can maintain a sacred and secular engagement with it (Peck, 1997). These and other aspects of the God-shaped hole are illustrated by the co-researchers’ reports which follow.

Catherine in Los Angeles described transitioning from having no awareness of spirituality to her investigation of Yoga philosophy, practice, and ritual, and finally her return to a form of contemplative, mystical Christianity. She believed that these changes resulted from her yoga practice, which initially led to her asking what she

²¹⁰ For example, those practising MBSR began to read Buddhist scripture and practice Buddhist ritual, while others who were practising yoga *āsanas* sought out Yogic texts, practices and rituals.

termed the “‘bigger questions’ like, ‘Why am I here?’” (Interview, 12th October, 2009). These are the same questions that Roger’s students asked, and that he described from the spiritual transformation he underwent after learning TM. Speaking of the origins of this transformation he said, “I had the experience of asking ‘I’m not just this personality’ or ‘I’m not just this body’, ‘what’s going on here?’ ‘I want to know more’” (Interview, 15th October, 2009). His and Catherine’s quest can be understood as an experience of the God-shaped hole.

Eunice’s experience of something similar began when she started practising a secular form of yoga at a gym where she had taken modern dance classes. As she became more interested in yoga and less in dance she moved to classes at the spiritually oriented Sivananda Yoga centre. In our interview she spoke of her initial experiences with yoga being much like her dance classes, as they both gave her a feeling of “complete refreshment like I’d had a complete break” (Interview, 22nd October, 2009). Then after completing a five-week *Introduction to Meditation* course at the Sivananda centre, she experienced a spiritual dimension to Yoga. Speaking of her transformation through this course, she said, “the whole thing is about focus you know, like if you focus your thoughts you’re able to see more clearly, to your soul, or God, or the positive, or whatever...” (ibid.). She then clarified this by saying, “I think I thought of it as God, but not God in the way that a lot of people think of God, because I think I already had an image of God being inside of us?” (ibid.). Jason, in Los Angeles, also described a transition from a secular gym-based yoga practice to one that had a spiritual foundation. He spoke of an intermediary space where he experienced the two ‘yogas’ joining, which he described as “just this sort of blending, it’s almost like in the tidal zone, you know you have the fresh water mixing with the sea water? Then eventually it all became ocean water when I got into the philosophy of it” (Interview, 11th October, 2009).

The ecology of the God-shaped hole

The God-shaped-hole experience requires and reveals an ecology that has two aspects – the individual practitioners’ sense of being interconnected with others, and their immersion in something that *felt* larger than them. Many of the co-researchers described these experiences as having an interrelational and spiritual quality. Agnes spoke of a deep sense of relationality, where she feels that her “mind is at peace...it’s

just becoming one with everyone else and loosing that ego identity” (Interview, 9th October, 2009). While Jorge Ferrer at the CIIS described a ubiquitous relationality, saying “for me all life is relational, contemplative states are relational...and my inner self is identical to the whole” (Interview, 5th November, 2009).

The experience of a divine ecological space was described by Angelica in Los Angeles, who found that her Yoga practice drew her to a holy and interconnected feeling. She said, “somehow the yoga brought that back, the connection with everything and the sacredness of each moment” (Interview, 29th October, 2009). In our interview, Angelica described two interconnecting meanings of the sacred; one is ‘space’ as it is used colloquially to mean a peaceful, private place or state undisturbed by the discursive, and the second is her sense of an internal ‘vastness’, that she reached after being in the first ‘space’. She spoke of the way that she experienced both in Yoga, and how this resulted in the quietening of her mind, “I still try to get a lot done but there is a soul underneath it all now, and that is so grounding...so it makes things more...it doesn’t make sense but there’s a ground...like its rooted in something, something big” (ibid.).

It is unclear what this ‘something bigger’ or ‘space’ is, though experiences of it often led the co-researchers to ask some of the ‘big questions’ outlined above. It is also uncertain why the God-shaped-hole experience can result from regular contemplative practice, though Yoga would say it is because the divine is inherent. Theologians Melvin Kimble and Susan McFadden (2003) concur, suggesting that contemplation is designed to result in transcendental and spiritual experience. They also propose that what is sensed through the God-shaped-hole experience is a divine ground of being both “immanent and transcendent. It is immanent in that it permeates everything. It is transcendent in that it is experienced as a sea of being” (Kimble & McFadden 2003, p. 36). This sense of permeability and transcendence was described by the co-researchers, who also emphasised the significance of the time it took for them to transition from secular to sacred practices, their *feeling* of an ecology or interrelationality in the God-shaped hole and of its spatial qualities. The God-shaped-hole experience impacted co-researchers as they moved from secular to spiritually-based contemplative practices and adopted lifestyles that supported these practices.

The politics of the God-shaped hole

The politics that framed these experiences can most clearly be seen in the co-researchers' reticence to discuss them outside their practice communities. It is also illustrated by the co-researchers' commitment to their contemplative practices because of the sense of autonomy it provided and their struggle at times to 'word' their God-shaped-hole experiences. Each of these aspects illustrates a form of resistance. In the first, the co-researchers' fear of being 'outed' in secular settings meant that they concealed the spiritual dimension of their practice. They felt that the retelling of their experiences could be dangerous, because it challenged the master narrative of mainstream education (Horn 2008, p. 597). While many of these individuals are not the marginalised minorities whose acts of resistance are usually described in this way, the methods they use to protect themselves from ridicule and disadvantage are similar.

The second, possibly unintentional act of resistance resulted for some co-researchers from the experiential, embodied nature of the practices that led them to the God-shaped hole. Through these practices they began to experience themselves beyond the coast of *tellyvisualarium*, where in individual embodied states they were free of media entrainment. The co-researchers relished being outside what Jason described as the "full-on corporate ladder, materialistic acquisition thing" (Interview, 11th October, 2009). He described the empowerment that could result from moving away from this materialism through Yoga, saying, "I think it's basically like, I just love this phrase, 'direct experience', its direct experience, it's just you having your experience and there's no middle man, you're not being told by a priest, or a king, or a governor – this is how you're supposed to feel, you're just actually up with your own self, and that's empowering" (ibid.). Christopher Chapple at LMU also spoke of the way that the autonomy implicit in Yoga was empowering and in this sense a form of resistance. He described how Yoga relies on individual, subjective experience, and how this enables it to resist complete commercialisation. While Yoga has been commercialised, its subjective aspects cannot be fully externalised, and therefore not completely commodified (Interview, 10th October, 2009). As Mike, one of Chapple's students, said "yoga is a very individual practice" (Interview, 21st October, 2009).

The third aspect of the politics underpinning God-shaped hole experiences relates to the co-researchers' struggles to find the right language to describe them. It can be argued that this is a result of the secularisation of society in which traditional religious institutes – the storehouses of this language – have lost their significance. In his discussion of this issue, Adam Possamai (2008) claims that while “religious institutes have lost their social significance, there are still people feeling and confronting religious experience they cannot always easily express” (p. 203). Co-researchers' reports of their God-shaped-hole experiences appear to support this, for they often spoke of an initial uncertainty about how to describe what they were feeling. Or they spoke of feeling uncomfortable as they tried to resolve their emerging beliefs with the forgotten religious languages and practices of their families. Eunice, a non-practicing Jew, described her father as an atheist and her mother as someone who didn't speak about Judaism much. However, when she first went to *satsaṅga* (or *satsang*)²¹¹ at the Sivananda centre in Los Angeles she said:

I was really freaked out, 'cause you know, even though I say I don't have that strong of a Jewish upbringing, I still...you know it's my background. Like you're supposed to only believe in one God and you don't worship idols. So we're sitting there in *satsang* and everyone's in this semi-circle around the altar, with all the idols, and I thought, ok I'm really, really uncomfortable with this. (Interview, 22nd October, 2009)

Eunice continued with workshops and classes at the Sivananda centre and eventually trained to be a Sivananda yoga teacher. In part, this was because of an early transcendent experience she had in her yoga training, where she *felt* as though she was immersed in the loving presence of a 'divine mother' (described in Chapter Five). Eunice, like many of the co-researchers, didn't describe this specifically as the permeable transcendence that can precede the God-shaped-hole experience. She also didn't describe her discomfort at *satsang* as a result of the politics of the God-shaped hole. However, the unease she felt when she initially tried to express and integrate both into her daily life would suggest that they were.

²¹¹ *Satsaṅga* or *satsang* is described on the Sivananda, Los Angeles website as, “the heart of yoga practice. It consists of thirty minutes of silent meditation, meditative chanting of mantras and an easy-to-follow lecture on yoga philosophy or psychology” (Sivananda Los Angeles ¶ 3).

All three aspects described here illustrate the politics that underlie God-shaped hole experiences. The co-researchers' concealment of their spiritual practices and beliefs, their attraction to the autonomous aspect of contemplative practice and their search for ways to express their experiences of the God-shaped hole can be understood as acts that resist the master narrative of mainstream education. This is a 'narrative' that underpins an educational system whose aim Morley suggests "in this kind of hyper-real, hyper-capitalist culture, is to make these young people, docile workers. Docile and effective, business leaders – aka capitalists, you know, people who own everything – they want good workers that will help them make more money, to put it simply" (Interview, 19th November, 2009). Art educators Dennis Atkinson and Paul Dash (2005) assert that this dominant narrative needs to be disrupted so as to provide more ecological (interrelational and intersubjective) and democratic approaches in education. They give the example of the 'narratives of deficiency' that have characterised minority students in their appeal for the return of an ecological approach that acknowledges and engages cultural diversity in education (Atkinson & Dash 2005). This approach is similar to that described by Kidner (2001) in his exploration of an 'ecological subjectivity', where an awareness of 'selfhood' is:

defined not only by its *contradistinction to* the world, but also through its *resonance with* the world; and this resonance invites us to perceive and participate in the world in a more-than-rational way, drawing out in us aspects of subjectivity that normally remain unrecognized and dormant in modern society. An ecological subjectivity, then, is both an enhanced awareness of the character of the world and an enhanced self-awareness; and these two enhancements cannot occur in isolation from one another. (p. 109)

Many contemplative education theorists also call for this more holistic understanding of students' subjectivities and the broadening of the narratives Atkinson and Dash describe above. While many don't describe what they are doing as political, their approach is, for it resists the current positivist narratives of mainstream education. Those that do recognise the politics of re-engaging the subjective and contemplative in education, point out "that education under social efficiency is only efficient for creating obedient workers, not for creating democratic citizens" (Kress 2011, p. 66; see also Goss 1999; Peterson 2008; Subbiondo 2006). Contemplative theorists/practitioners offer

contemplative education as an antidote to the mindlessness resulting from the accelerating pressures of modern capitalist society. The emphasis in this educational approach on ‘slow’ or reflective time²¹² subverts current time poverty caused by multitasking, information overload, fragmented focus and chronic stress, while its practices can provide a different experience of time similar to the one described by Jason:

After say a vigorous *āsana* class and then into a *śavāsana*²¹³ and meditation, there was enough space you know to just kind of feel the miraculous nature of my own subjectivity, as opposed to like the hurrying and scurrying about with objective eye glasses looking at everything and then turning it on myself. Well oh yeh, that’s just a tendon on a knee, and it’s got a three-micron tear there so there’s pain, but funny, wait this pain wasn’t here yesterday, it only came out when I just got that bad news about, whatever – having to work that extra shift that I didn’t want to work. I think slowing down enough in the yoga class is what allows you to get a kind experience of *beingness* that you don’t get if your nose is in a book, or if you’re chasing after the Jones’s trying to keep up, you know. The trouble is though that when people finally rest they turn on the TV and just zone out, cause they can’t handle that space of quietness, it’s too freaky. (Interview, 11th October, 2009)

A co-researcher’s story of the three stages of learning feelings

The benefits of contemplation for education outlined in the God-shaped hole stage of cognitive change and the intermediary and pre-predicative phases of the *learning feelings* process are significant. A co-researcher’s story outlining her experience of each of these phases provides a succinct overview of the *learning feelings* process and its positive impact in her life. This story is told by Ruth, a 41-year-old psychologist who was a participant at the *Beyond the Doors* retreat in Waitapu, New Zealand. Ruth’s description of a significant event on this retreat illustrates the three stages of

²¹² Here I am referencing the ‘slow movement’, which started in 1986 in Italy with the ‘slow food’ movement, when Carlo Petrini opened a restaurant in Rome that used seasonal food sourced from local farmers to protest the opening of the first McDonalds in Rome. The movement has grown to encompass a vision of a ‘Slow Planet’, which resists the current acceleration of almost all human activity.

²¹³ *Śavāsana* or the corpse pose is a basic relaxation pose, which consists of lying on the back with palms up and feet slightly apart.

learning feelings as they have been outlined in this and the two preceding chapters. She relates her initial pre-predicative and somatic learning, and discusses how it was pivotal in the cognitive change she made to her relationship with the natural world, she said:

Stage 1: The pre-predicative and somatic

The first day I was moving on the beach I had a really interesting experience that I've never had before. My partner and I started exploring the beach looking for a place to move in, we kind of rolled down hills together, and I got very drawn into details that I'd never noticed before. Like the shapes in the sand that the wind makes, which are very similar to the shapes that the sea makes under the water... We'd been outside for quite a long time, and it was very, very windy and I was improvising around a log and just playing in the wind. Then my partner suggested we do an exercise, because we'd been told these three concepts: 'connect', 'explore', 'respond'. We'd been told to connect with ourselves first, and then our partner, and then the environment.

My partner said, 'Well let's come back to connecting to ourselves.' I'd been dancing with my eyes shut when she said this, and I realised that I couldn't really find a 'self' to connect to, and it felt really strange. It didn't feel bad but I felt completely empty, like this empty vessel and there was just the wind, and I was in the wind, and obviously I'm kind of aware, but what I was aware of was this kind of seeking. Like, 'Where have I gone'? And I was almost looking, kind of somewhere in my abdomen, 'cause I think, I kind of sense myself centred in my belly usually when I'm dancing. But I couldn't even feel the sense of having a belly, and I had to open my eyes and lie down on the sand to get a sense of 'Me'. And it felt kind of, in one way, really lovely that I didn't really have a boundary between me and the beach, or a sense of ego. That having moved so much in the wind and with the sand all around, *I'd* just disappeared!

Stage 2: The intermediary stage, shifting between the pre-predicative, somatic and cognitive

When I opened my eyes and I lay down, and I could watch myself, then I had more of a sense of me as human again...and once I let go of trying to connect with myself it was much easier. It was like I'd got transitioned and was connected with the environment somehow more than me. It really took me by surprise that I'd disappeared. And I've never had that before; I mean I'm not even that good at mindfulness meditation, usually I think quite a lot. It was really surprising, that there was just the wind, and like I could have been anything, like a kind of seed pod, or a thin container. I had a sense of there being an outside and an inside, but no sense of there being lots of thoughts, or me being this being?

Before this, I probably saw Nature as 'other', something to be saved, something that humans have a responsibility to look after, and something that I kind of enjoy and love. There are all these beautiful environments near where I live and they are somewhere I love to go, but they're more like a resource or a room that I enter rather than something that I feel I have a sense of oneness with, or being in, that I had here with the wind and the sand. I felt, once I really slowed down, when I was lying on the sand and melting into the sand...there was a lot of stuff going on at an almost imagery level but...it also had a really physical sense. I felt kind of aware in one sense of my physicality, of heat, or my skin, or the sensation of melting, in one way? There was something about the heat that started connecting my skin and the sand, and there was skin, sand, and heat, and it all kind of got mixed up, and I was sort of there inside that experience. So I didn't have that sense of, kind of, me looking any more, it was like I was with the sand, and with the heat...

Stage 3: The cognitive assimilation of the pre-predicative and somatic

Yeh, I felt very immersed in the natural environment and able to, in one way, open my eyes up to it. But there's also been this really strong sense of *it* opening up to me, as if I'm being welcomed in, as if it was kind of a mutual relationship. I think it was because I could slow down, and arrive, that the land could also do something actively that made it different for the both of us. Perhaps I'm kind of...what's it called personifying or something, you know,

humanising it, but it didn't really feel like I was making it human, just that there was something happening from both sides, and a real sense of feeling the aliveness of the space. I know it's got life force but I had a real sense that I could really feel it as a living force and of me being a living force, and us, me and the land, being these living forces together. So there has been a kind of change in my relationship to Nature, so it doesn't feel so me and other anymore...

...One of the things I feel after this experience, and I'm not sure how I'll do it, but I want to bring more ritual into my daily life, and into my children's lives...It's also encouraged me to try and slow down and spend more time within specific environments...There's probably space for that and maybe political action? Though there's something about that? The soul's missed out in politics, we're saving the planet but we haven't even saved ourselves. Or we haven't had the relationship with ourselves and the land that we could have. We're so busy doing ... I don't know, giving out leaflets or telling people where to vote, that it actually is not at all 'resourcing'...And for me, it's also about working to my strengths as well. I've probably got more of a gift for helping people get an embodied connection within themselves and the environment than I have for politics, though I did once stand as a Greens Party candidate and might do again. (Interview, 27th March, 2009).

In summary

This project asks how contemplation affects positive change for students. The question has been answered throughout the thesis, though this chapter's engagement with the co-researchers' cognitive translation of their pre-predicative and somatic *feelings* has provided the most 'visible' outcomes of contemplation in learning. While the overview of the earlier stages of *learning feelings* provided in the previous two chapters revealed aspects of the co-researchers' *feeling meanings*, this chapter has shown how these *meanings* surfaced cognitively in the co-researchers' daily lives. However, their cognitive realisations are not presented as a more advanced level than the making of *felt meaning*, rather, all these phases are understood here to be part of a continuum of making meaning.

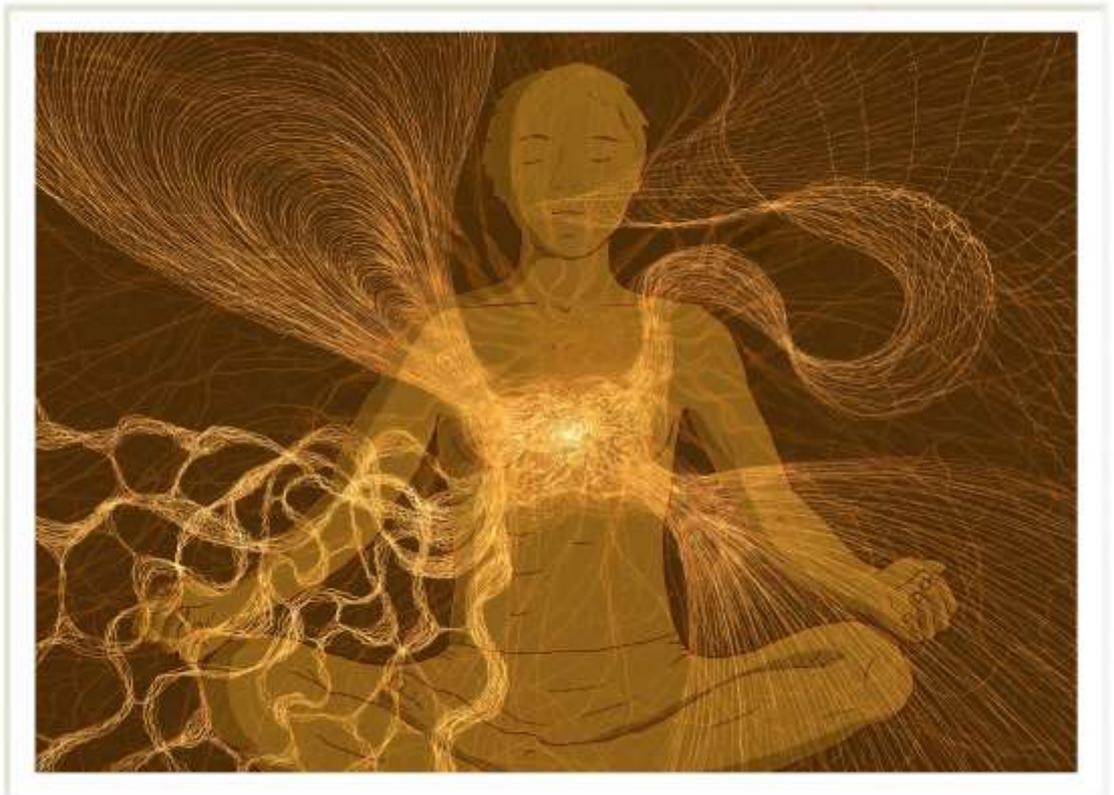
Contemplation is essential to this continuum and many of the reasons its alchemical processes directly interface with *learning feeling* have been discussed in this chapter. Most important is the suggestion that the reflective inner space experienced in contemplation supports the learning it can facilitate. Contemplative theorists Tim Porter-O’Grady and Kathy Malloch emphasise the significance of this space in education through their proposition that contemplation allows time for the “brain to integrate and transmute all information, data, and experience to create insights at a higher level of consciousness” (2010, p. 320). This project, takes that proposition a step further by suggesting that the ‘integration’ is actuated by the processes of the *feeling nexus* in its elemental ground-of-being. It also provides the schema of the three stages of *learning feelings* which is where the integration occurs and detailed in this and the previous two chapters. These chapters provide an overview of the *learning feelings* process for educators interested in incorporating contemplation into their pedagogy.

In this chapter, which examines the last most direct cognitive stage of *learning feelings*, the co-researchers described different aspects of the metacognitive awareness they developed. This state of witnessing supported the positive physiological and psychological outcomes they experienced, including the reduction of stress, anxiety and depression. Metacognition also underpinned results specific to their academic lives, such as their heightened ability to focus attention, process information and retain and retrieve information. The co-researchers’ descriptions of their growing metacognitive awareness, such as Baden’s realisation that she could see how her ‘toxic emotions’ negatively impacted her personal and student life, provided further insight into this last stage of the *learning feelings* process.

In addition to the development of metacognition, which helped co-researchers release negative subconscious patterns, they experienced changes in their values and ethical engagement in the world. These modifications were supported by the deep focus of contemplation, which frequently led to interrelational experiences where co-researchers engaged a permeable mode of transcendence. This immersion in a vast interrelationality reinforced their sense of connection with themselves, interconnection with others and Nature, which many had not *felt* before. Their awareness of this interrelational presence led a number of the co-researchers to question the lack of spirituality or religiosity in their lives. The resulting transformations in their

understandings of themselves initiated both minor and significant changes in their lives. Some engaged at a more advanced level in their studies, some answered many of the 'big' questions that can trouble students and educators, and others lived healthier, more balanced and peaceful lives.

Conclusion



Cameron Beau Wylie Foster, 2013

As I come to the end of this thesis, I return to the question I initially asked. Is there a foundation beyond the physiological and psychological to the learning that can occur through contemplation? To answer this I examined the co-researchers' subjective contemplative experiences using a phenomenological methodology and Yoga, phenomenology, educational philosophy and neuroscience theory. Using this interdisciplinary approach to focus on the co-researchers' pre-predicative and somatic *feelings* answered the question framing this project, as it revealed a recurring phenomenon that I have termed *contemplative synaesthesia*. The co-researchers' frequent reports of *feeling* this internal merging of different modes of human experience led to my realisation that they were engaging an elemental gestalt process. Naming it the *feeling nexus* suggests its integrative force, which is, I suggest, what underpins learning through contemplation. Central to this is an elemental, interrelational ground that the *feeling nexus* resides in, the *contemplative trajectory* the co-researchers frequently traversed and the *learning feelings* process they experienced in this trajectory. As this is an original study in contemplative education, I was required to develop this hypothetical mechanism, passage and process to describe what I was finding in the co-researchers' reports from contemplation. The *feeling nexus* is a unique concept in contemplative education theory that relies on an understanding of *feeling* as more than affectivity. This study suggests that deep states of contemplative focus provide access to this *feeling* of the pre-predicative and somatic experience of the *gestalt* of modes of human experience produced by the *feeling nexus*. What can then follow, according to the co-researchers' stories of change, is the meaning making process of *learning feelings*.

Engaging the co-researchers' accounts of these stages supported my entry into a realm frequently avoided in educational theory because of its proposed ineffability. Accessing it phenomenologically meant that I gained a deeper understanding of the co-researchers' subjective experience, and the realisation that these experiences are not inexpressible. For in the co-researchers' attempts to describe what they were *feeling*, they developed idiosyncratic *feeling languages* and *maps*, which they used to navigate the contemplative interior. These findings, the interdisciplinary theoretical examination of them and the project's methods set this study apart from much of the work of contemplative education scholars. Although we are examining similar aspects, such as contemplative experience, expanded somatic awareness and the positive outcomes of

contemplation in learning, I have principally focused on the phenomenologies of the co-researchers' interior experience to gain an understanding of foundations of learning through contemplation.²¹⁴

The results arising from this phenomenological approach fall into two main categories – those substantiating the *feeling nexus* hypothesis, and results germane to contemplative pedagogy. Both are grounded in this project's thesis of interrelationality, which can be seen in the reoccurrence of an ecological force throughout it, ranging from the permeable body to the *feeling nexus* and the elemental interrelational substrate it resides in.

Evidencing the feeling nexus

This project's critical examination of the form and processes of the *feeling nexus* resulted in six central findings, starting with the conception of an ecological body, which through its interrelational form provides access to the *feeling nexus*. Following this is the understanding that the deepening somatic focus, which can be experienced in contemplation, supported the co-researchers' entrainment by the *feeling nexus* and the ensuing sense of integration that underpins learning through contemplation. Fundamental to this unifying experience is the *contemplative synaesthesia* produced by the gestalt processes of the *feeling nexus*, which was revealed by the co-researchers' *feeling languages*. Thirdly, is the proposition of a *contemplative trajectory* in which the co-researchers moved through increasingly refined states of inner awareness to encounters with the integrating force of the *feeling nexus*. Next, embedded in this trajectory is a process of meaning making titled *learning feelings*, which contains pre-predicative and somatic stages of learning that are said to underpin its last stage of cognitive knowing. Fifthly, insight into the workings of the *feeling nexus* in this process was variously provided by this project's interdisciplinary approach. Its correlation of phenomenology and Yoga philosophy was particularly significant, as it revealed a direct correspondence between the *feeling nexus*, the *legein* from

²¹⁴ It is important to note that despite contemplative practices often being the domain of theological debate this project's focus is the workings of the contemplative state of consciousness in education rather than the interrogation of the distinctions drawn between different religious schools' understandings of contemplative experience.

phenomenology and the *guṇas* from Yoga. Lastly, this project's examination of the co-researchers' *feeling languages* counters the proposed ineffability of subjective states of consciousness and their frequent absence in educational discourse.

These findings are predicated on a thesis of interrelationality, starting with the co-researchers' experience of their interrelational *ecological body*, which can be deeply intertwined in the learning process because it permeates and is permeated by its contexts. The suggestion that this form of bodily experience illustrates the elemental and ecological forces that it can *feel* is based on three propositions. Firstly, that experience of the ecological body arises through contemplative consciousness as it is defined in this project. Importantly, the way this form of consciousness generates experiences, such as the co-researchers' sense of the skin boundaries of their bodies dissolving, highlights the porous nature of this body and its ability to provide access to the *feeling nexus*. Secondly, the mirroring of the form of the ecological body in that of the *feeling nexus* supports the third finding, which suggests that the co-researchers' integrative experiences of it resulted from a form of entrainment. This happened as they began to resonate with the *feeling nexus* when they came into sustained contact with it through deep contemplative focus. In a number of cases this resulted in the co-researchers' sensing disparate aspects of themselves reintegrating. This experience drew them into centred and balanced states that supported the new and positive meanings they made of their personal and educational lives.

Underpinning this unifying experience is the *contemplative synaesthesia* produced by the gestalt process of the *feeling nexus*. This interior sense of the drawing together of different modes of being was a recurring phenomenon in the co-researchers' reports from contemplation. The discovery of this integrative process through my translation of the co-researchers' *feeling languages* is the central finding of this project. It not only outlines a foundation for learning in contemplation, but it counters a politics of subjectivity in mainstream education, which has left subjective states, such as the contemplative, unexamined because of their proposed ineffability.

Fundamental to the schema of meaning making actuated by contemplative somatic experience of the *feeling nexus* is the proposition of a *contemplative trajectory*, which many of the co-researchers traversed. The *contemplative trajectory* not only provides a

schema with which to understand contemplative education experience, but it further illustrates the form and processes of the *feeling nexus*. The first stage of the *contemplative trajectory* began with the co-researchers' return to their bodies, followed by movement through deepening levels of contemplative consciousness. Their increasingly refined inner perception led to awareness of an interrelational presence in their internal landscapes. The co-researchers' sense of this interrelationality continued to develop through the next three stages where they experienced an expanded affectivity, an altered sense of time and space and a primordial ground-of-being. Each of these stages of the *contemplative trajectory* provided further evidence for the conception of the *feeling nexus* as a fundamental drive or teleological force. In particular, Csikszentmihályi's (1992) *teleonomy of self* was shown to be equivalent to the *feeling nexus*. This integrative force is framed by a 'goal-seeking tendency' which shapes choice making, while the fundamental drive for order and pleasure is satisfied by calm and focused contemplative states like *flow*. The innate integrative drive of the *teleonomy of self*, similar to that of the *feeling nexus*, is defined in Yoga's conception of a unifying force present in a continuous exchange between centrifugal and centripetal dynamics at work in yoga practice. The centrifugal tendency of consciousness as a force drawing adherents towards mistaken identity and self-fragmentation is ameliorated through a "counter process of the nirodha mode or centripetalization of consciousness, an interiorization and centering of consciousness that transcends and heals the fractured consciousness of self" (Whicher 1998(a), pp. 206, 207).

Moreover, this project's investigation of the *learning feelings* process embedded in the *contemplative trajectory* highlighted the role of *contemplative synaesthesia* in contemplative education. The workings of its integrative force were highlighted in the pre-predicative and embodied, intermediary and cognitive stages of *learning feelings*. The balanced states that resulted from *contemplative synaesthesia* experience supported co-researchers to engage more of themselves in their learning. Evidence from neuroscience and meditation research related to these schemas of learning provided descriptions of interrelational physiological processes similar in form to the *feeling nexus*. One of the most relevant was the process of 'somatic re-perception,' an embodied form of meta-awareness in which modes of being are sensed as interwoven.

As the *feeling nexus* is a hypothetical mechanism developed from the co-researchers' reports, and therefore only known by its outcomes, understandings of its structure and workings were advanced using analogous theoretical models. In particular, the *legein*, a pivotal concept in Martin Heidegger's work on language, and the Yogic concept of the *gunas* and their emergence from the divine substrate of *Brahman* were used. The correspondence between the *feeling nexus* and these models can be seen in the *legein's* drawing-together activity and relations with its ground – *logos*, which is the original source of the *legein's* gathering and laying down. The integrating processes defined in the Yogic concept of the *gunas* and their activation in the ubiquitous interrelationality of *Brahman* supplies further insight into the *feeling nexus* and its ground.

Implications for contemplative pedagogy

This project's suggestions for contemplative pedagogy start with findings related to the co-researchers' return to their bodies, their expanded somatic awareness and the conceptualisation of this awareness as the *ecological body*. Following this are propositions related to the *feeling languages* the co-researchers used to describe their contemplative interior experience. Next are results from this study's examination of the *contemplative trajectory*, particularly the co-researchers' heightened subjective awareness of moving through interior levels, encounters with a witness consciousness and an interrelational presence. Finally, there is a reminder of the neuroscience and meditation, and psychology and pedagogy research currently providing physiological and psychological evidence for the benefits of integrating contemplative practices into education.

The relevance of the ecological or permeable body for contemplative pedagogy starts with its challenge to Cartesianism in mainstream education, as its ecology helps resolve the body/mind, subjective/objective divide. It is useful for educators wanting to engage the contemplative to develop an awareness of the artificial barriers erected between mind and body, and the frequent exclusion of bodily being in mainstream academic settings. This can lead to their rejection of an 'invisible pedagogy' that they may have unconsciously been applying in their methods. Working from this more reflexive space will support their development of holistic approaches congruent with contemplative experience that acknowledge 'other ways of knowing', particularly somatic knowing.

In addition six key issues related to somatic contemplative education were identified in this study. Firstly, the need to acknowledge the paradox of conceptualising contemplative embodied learning as both fluid and framed by context. Secondly, to consider learners' commonalities and differences, in the provision of appropriate embodied contemplative learning experiences. Thirdly, it is important to support the development of learning communities within the educational setting, for they are vital in the creation of a sense of relatedness and trust that students need when taking the risk of consciously employing their bodies in learning. Fourthly, the contemplative pedagogue needs to account for the psychosomatic entrainment that can occur through contemplative somatic awareness and its idiosyncratic, fragile and subtle nature. Fifthly, when engaging contemplative somatic states it can be useful to acknowledge and employ the intersubjectivity and interrelationality of them. Lastly, the 'whole-student' approach to teaching includes the embodied experience of the student and teacher in the educational relationship.

It is useful for pedagogues engaging these issues to take a holistic approach that is congruent with contemplative experience. This project provided examples from dance theory, which examined the creation of non-linguist scripts used to bridge the body-mind divide. Musical and choreographic notation was introduced as a model for analogues scripts that could be created from contemplative education students' *feeling languages*. Another suggestion from dance pedagogy was the use of stillness practices, similar to the mindfulness exercises commonly used in contemplative education. These stillness and 'intentional rest' practices, which link directly with students' 'inner narratives', are said to facilitate their entry into more refined levels of awareness that can last beyond the practice. Importantly, these practices are understood to be a part of an extensive 'somatic repertoire', which is valuable for educators to develop so that they are prepared for the diversity of many student cohorts.

Contemplative educators engaging other ways of knowing, such as the contemplative, somatic and affective, often critique a common taxonomy of learning founded on the acquisition of increasingly more complex and abstract knowledge. This schema of simple to complex, concrete to abstract frequently overlooks the development of somatic and affective skills. To counter this, contemplative approaches de-emphasise the role of rationality and support other forms of knowing. The learning that can then

arise often speaks through heightened affective and somatic awareness in the form of symbol and metaphor. Creating methods that acknowledge and support students' development of these symbol languages starts with the creation of a contemplative orientation in the educational setting. This is followed by the introduction of somatic contemplative practices, such as yoga, to help elicit the *feeling languages* that can arise through enhanced somatic awareness. In addition, it can also reverse negative impacts of the increasing mindlessness, time poverty and chronic stress that students and educators suffer. Designing pedagogy that enhances the development of *feeling languages* requires an understanding of the interrelations of lived experience and learning, the way that contemplative education students may experience themselves as permeable, the wide range of their contemplative experiences and the variety of ways they may apply what they learn. Pedagogues who understand these issues can more readily support the co-creation of many different forms of knowing in the pedagogical exchange.

Further insight into contemplative pedagogy arose through this project's investigation of the *contemplative trajectory*, which followed their passage through the five stages of the: return to the body, the deeping of internal senses, enhanced experiences of affectivity, an altered sense of space and time, and a ground-of-being experience. Each was important in the co-researchers' development of new meanings through contemplation, though the last, the ground-of-being stage highlights many aspects of the contemplative trajectory important for contemplative pedagogues. In this phase, the co-researchers' sense of moving through interior layers and levels was found to be linked with their development of *felt knowing* and *meaning*. This metaphorical expression of their ground-of-being experience supplies educators with an example of the outcomes of pre-figurative/somatic meaning making that can occur in contemplation. Also, it illustrates the need to understand and engage with the richness and complexity of students' passage through it. In addition, the co-researchers' encounters with the witness consciousness in this stage were important in their translation of pre-predicative and somatic contemplative experience, as it lent a cognitive tone to their *feelings*. The witness is often understood in contemplative and integral education as a form of metacognition. Students who are able to shift from an unconscious awareness to a witness consciousness are able to examine the confluence of thoughts, sensory input, reactions and subjective data that combines in everyday states of consciousness. Their

increased metacognition can lead to heightened clarity, equanimity, tolerance and empathy toward themselves and others. Designing pedagogy that encourages metacognition supports students to interrupt automatic patterns of conditioned thinking, sensing and behaving. By affirming these experiences educators can help students to move beyond limiting beliefs, where they can problem solve using new and creative approaches that support the integration of new information, and understandings of themselves into their academic and personal lives.

The co-researchers' encounters with the witness consciousness also highlights the importance of interrelational experience in education, particularly the intersection of praxis, student, educator and their contexts. The interrelational and intersubjective experience that can arise in contemplation is an important aspect of contemplative education, for pedagogues can utilise it to harness the energy generated by groups. The holistic educational approaches that do this, aim to employ the objective, inter-objective, subjective, and inter-subjective experiences of students. Contemplative educators wanting to take an integral or holistic approach first need to acknowledge the immersive nature and interactional patterns of the educational relationship. This is linked to the notion of care in education, which is founded on reciprocity and intersubjectivity. However, 'care' is not uni-directional, it requires the care of both members of the educational relationship. When this occurs it underpins the creation of trusting environments, which support the relational spaces of dialogue that are essential in contemplative, transformative and creative educational settings.

The neuroscience and meditation research increasingly being used by contemplative theorists has revealed brain activity associated with all of these benefits. Related psychological and pedagogical research also supports claims that contemplation enhances academic performance, positively impacts mental health and psychological well-being, and encourages a sense of wholeness or integration. Contemplative educators seeking these benefits for their students can start by considering methods that support the increased ability to focus attention and process information provided by contemplative practices. For despite this being an important educational skill, it is rarely trained for in mainstream education. This can be simply resolved by introducing contemplative practices, which, I suggest, are most easily developed using the pedagogues own contemplative experience. According to pertinent research in this

area, the introduction of these practices will result in students' enhanced physiological and psychological well-being. Educators may also find that contemplative methods will improve the advancement of the 'whole student', as they can support increased self-awareness. This includes the examination of values and beliefs, and the questioning of issues related to emotional maturity, moral development, spirituality and self-understanding.

Summary and recommendations for further research

In its development of a *thesis of feeling*, with the *feeling nexus*, *feeling languages* and the *learning feelings* process, this study provides a view of contemplative consciousness that can be used to answer questions related to the foundations of learning through contemplation. It emphasises the rich ground of pre-predicative and somatic knowing for further research, while at the same time introducing pedagogues to methods they can use to navigate the contemplative interior. Although current contemplative theory engages neuroscience and psychological research to highlight both the neglect and importance of the subjective and contemplative in educational research, there is a danger that significant, related philosophical findings may be overlooked. One of the aims of this project has been to counter that, by foregrounding the value of its phenomenological methods, the rich data that can result, and the benefits of using sciences of consciousness such as phenomenology and Yoga philosophy, in the examination of the foundations of contemplative learning.

The approach detailed in this study, as I suggest, is useful in contemplative education research that engages almost any discipline. However, I am particularly interested in applied areas such as adult education, literacy, pedagogical design and the development of methods congruent with the contemplative and 'other ways of knowing' in a wide range of disciplinary areas. These include but are not limited to: educational philosophy, theology, environmental philosophy and fine arts.²¹⁵ Irrespective of the discipline, it is important when initiating contemplative education research, to acknowledge the elemental ecologies inherent in the student, or knower, their knowing

²¹⁵ While it is not a specific interest of mine at this stage an obvious area to investigate would be comparisons between the contemplative experiences of students from different religious and secular contemplative education settings.

and the known. Approaches that do this might then ask three questions: ‘How do you translate subjective contemplative experience?’ ‘How might you develop common understandings of the *felt languages* practitioners use to describe it?’, and ‘Why is it important to do so?’ Research underpinned by these or similar questions will, I believe, advance understandings of the foundations of learning. For example, a contemplative adult literacy scholar’s exploration of the *felt languages* that underpin language acquisition in pre-literate populations could reveal significant insights into this extremely important area of adult learning.

Reflecting on possible further research, I realised the value of the insider approach and the contemplative interviewing technique. Nonetheless, while they could be developed in a variety of ways beneficial for contemplative theory, I feel the most useful initial addition to the methodology developed in this study would be to include a pre-interview meditation with co-researchers. This would provide a contemplative space for the interview where the researcher and co-researcher are closer to the subjective experience, so making it easier to recall. Additional research might also employ longitudinal studies, and one that was highlighted in this project related to the question James Morley posed about the relations between improved contemplative practice and improved grades.

This project’s emphasis on the subtlety and fragility of the *meanings* that can arise through precognitive, somatic, and cognitive stages in contemplative learning outlined the need for educational settings that encourage the development of these tenuous *meanings*. Further study in this area might elaborate the components of these settings, plus the attitudes needed to maintain them. Related to this would be research that focuses on the politics of subjectivity inherent in the absence of these settings and attitudes in much mainstream education. Lastly, further research to expand the interdisciplinary approach developed in this study could trial other combinations of East-West philosophies and further customise the phenomenological methods. It might also develop approaches that encourage philosophical engagement in interdisciplinary cohorts that investigate contemplation in learning.

Most importantly, any of these propositions for future research need to be conducted in a way that maintains the integrity of the elemental foundations of contemplation and

students and educators' experience of it. To do this, contemplative theorists need to *know* the gestalts of their own internal processes, as this will assist in their creation of pedagogy that supports students and educators' engagement with the interrelational foundations of learning.

GLOSSARY

A

Advaita

Non-duality, is one of six schools (āstika) of Hindu philosophy: Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Mīmāṃsā, and Vedānta. Advaita Vedānta, propounded by the Hindu saint and scholar Ādi Śaṅkarācārya (788 CE – 820 CE), and arguably the most significant of the three sub-schools of Vedānta, is a monistic system founded on the compresence of the Self or *ātman* and the universal divine *Brahman*.

Ājñā

In both Hinduism and Buddhism the pineal gland is associated with the third eye, which is said to be the site of the sixth or *ājñā cakra*. In his text on esoteric physiology Benjamin Walker (1974) outlines the site of the pineal gland, describing it as a “small endocrine body the size of a pea ...situated near the middle of the skull not far from the pituitary gland and is connected with the third ventricle which supposedly governs reason and judgement” (p. 44). Theosophists and some psychopharmacology researchers hypothesis that the pineal gland is the seat of the third eye and that N,N-dimethyltryptamine (DMT), a powerful psychedelic substance is produced in the pineal gland, but there is currently no physiological evidence to support this, though the necessary constituent methyltransferase enzyme, is found in the pineal gland.

Āsana

Translates as ‘seat’, *āsanas* or yoga movements/postures are the third of Patanjali’s eight limbs of yoga from his seminal Yoga Sūtras.

Ātman

Self or *puruṣa* can be understood as that which is ‘prior to everything’ (Feuerstein 1990, pp. 280, 281), or as pure spirit. *Ātman* can also be understood as the individual ‘s’elf (*jīva-ātman*) and the supreme transcendental self (*parama-ātman*) or ‘S’elf.

Avyakta

State of equilibrium.

Āyur-veda

Āyur-veda (life-science) is considered to be an appendix to the *Atharva-Veda*, which contains the traditional, natural Indian medical system, known in the West as *Āyurvedic* medicine. The *Āyurvedic* healing system includes herbal medicine, dietetics, bodywork, surgery, psychology and spirituality (Frawley 2000). It is founded on the concept of three elemental *doṣas*, bodily humors or constitutional types, *vāta* (air, wind, movement), *vāta* governs energy and activity; *pitta* (fire, digesting, bile), which gives warmth and the ability to transform substances in the body, *kapha* (water, phlegm) or that which holds all together. An imbalance in the *doṣas* is said to cause disease.

B

Befindlichkeit

Befindlichkeit is used by the German philosopher Martin Heidegger to mean “the ‘pre-ontological understanding of being’ which attunes and destines our gestural being,...that is to be found and retrieved by a reflection which parts company with the subjectivity of the *ego-cogito* and its co-emergent object in order to recollect, ‘beneath the subject’” (Levin 1999, p. 142).

Bhaava, bhāva

Is often translated as feeling or emotion, though the translation that the Yoga scholar Georg Feuerstein gives is more useful here: “*bhāva*, which is a derivative of *bhū*, means “being,” “condition,” “nature,” “disposition,” and “feeling” (Feuerstein 1992, p. 54). In this sense *bhāva* is a ‘beingness’ in which the adherent is immersed in feelings that contain many conditions, which can ultimately lead to *rasa* or the total immersion in the “bliss of intimate love-participation in God” (ibid).

Bhajans

Bhajans are Hindu spiritual or devotional songs, they praise the *Guru* or deities, answer fundamental questions, and tell stories related to spiritual lessons. They are often associated with *Bhakti Yoga* or the Yoga of devotion.

Bhakta

Hindu spiritual devotee, the *bhakta* is involved in *bhakti* or religious devotion.

Bhūtātman

The psychophysical being, or empirical, elemental or empirical self.

Bīja (Mantra)

Seed word, *bīja* mantras are monosyllabic representations of more complex sound combinations often used in the esoteric practice of *Tantrism*.

Body-mind in Yoga

The body-mind in Yoga is equipped with: an energy supply (*prāṇa*); a sensory/perceptual system to detect activities in the physical world (*jñānendriyas*); a sense of 'I'-ness (*ahaṃkāra*); memory (*citta*); a cognitive (thinking, planning) mechanism to assess input and to decide on behaviour (*manas, buddhi and higher*); an affective (emotions and feelings - motivational) mechanism to activate behaviour (*manas and higher*); organs of action to approach or avoid outer objects and otherwise act in the world (Rishi Vivekananda 2005, p. 23).

Brahman

Derived from the root *br̥h* (to grow or expand) means 'vast expanse' or absolute. In the *Vedas* *Brahman* stood for prayer or meditation that evoked the universal divine power. Then in the eighth or ninth century BC, *Brahman* came to mean the "supreme principle behind and above all the various deities and beings" (Feuerstein 1990, p. 64). *Brahman* should not be confused with *Brahma* who is the creator God in the Hindu triad of *Śiva*, *Viṣṇu*, and *Brahmā*.

Buddhi

Is the faculty of wisdom or higher mind, and contrasts with *manas* or lower mind. *Buddhi* in classical Yoga stands for 'cognition' and is said to be the 'deepest aspect' of the human psyche.

C

Cakra

These wheels or psychic and energy centers are located in the body, and Yoga suggests that there are thousands of *cakras* but there are seven main *chakras*, these are the *Mūlādhāra cakra* or root *cakra*, centered in the root of the spinal column; *Svādhiṣṭhāna cakra*, centered in the sexual organs region; *Maṇipūra cakra*, at the navel center; *Anāhata cakra*, at the heart center; *Viśuddhi cakra* at the laryngeal center; *Ājñā cakra* located between the eyebrows or third eye center, and the *Sahasrāra cakra* at the crown. (There is also the *Bindu cakra*, centered in the vertex region of the head, which is a *Tantric cakra*, and not always mentioned).

Chiasm

The *chiasm* is an aspect of Merleau-Ponty's theory of perception, it is the point of intersection, where both sides of bodily being (self/world) are brought into relationship, which Merleau-Ponty terms 'a double belongingness'. This intertwining (*entrelacs*) or *chiasm* is a primal inter-relation, pre-existent in the perceptible and revealed through the act of perceiving.

Cintā

Contemplation.

Cit

Pure Awareness

Citta vṛtti nirodhaḥ

Citta vṛtti nirodhaḥ articulates the goal of Yoga, it is generally translated as "the cessation of the misidentification with the modifications of the mind" (Whicher 1998(a), p. 1).

Corps proper

One's own body.

D

Deepak

Lamp or source of light, this is often an oil lamp.

Dhāraṇā

Attention, concentration, or sustained focus, it is the second of Yoga's four stages of meditation.

Dharma

Dharma is derived from the root *dhy*, to 'hold' or 'retain'. It has a number of meanings, for example in classical Yoga it is used to mean form or quality, it can also mean 'righteousness' or 'virtue', and is also often translated as law or one's duty.

Dharma-megha-samādhi

Or entasy of the *dharma* cloud, is the last stage of *samādhi*, it follows *viveka-khyāti* (vision of discernment) and it heralds the ultimate liberation (*kaivalya*).

Dhṛti

Dhṛti or steadiness is the first stage in Yoga's four stages of meditation.

Dhyāna

Or meditation follows *dhāraṇā*. In *dhyāna* the adherent can apprehend the *draṣtri* (Seer). *Dhyāna* is followed by the fourth stage in meditation by *samādhi* (enstasy).

Draṣtri

This witness-consciousness or 'Seer', is the pure Awareness (*cit*) that abides eternally beyond the senses and the mind, continually perceiving all of the contents of consciousness.

Dukka (In Sanskrit *duḥkha* – in Pali *dukkha*)

Often translated as 'suffering' or 'disquiet' is the focus of the Buddhist 'Four Noble Truths', which acknowledge the dissatisfactions of life and the universal experiences of pain, illness, old age and death.

Dhawq

Taste

E

The eidos

The ‘pure essence’ in Husserlian phenomenology, derived from an application of the *epoché* or bracketing of preconceptions and judgments.

Emic and etic

Are two terms used by anthropologists and other social science researchers to refer to two kinds of positions in qualitative research. The *emic* or insider perspective is derived from an individual researcher who resides within the culture that is being studied, versus the *etic*, or the outsider perspective, which is understood to be the neutral stance that comes from an ‘observer’ of a culture .

(the) Epoché

Is the bracketing or suspension of preconceptions, which the phenomenologist applies in an attempt to engage with the ‘things themselves’.

Exemplar sensible

The body as it exhibits itself to the world.

F

Flesh (*la chair*)

The *flesh* ontology was developed by Merleau Ponty (1968) in his *Visible and Invisible*. It can be visualised as a tissue that underpins and gives rise to the perceiver and perceived in the act of perception. It is an ‘element’ in the classical sense, and is a procreative force caused by a continuous process whereby it folds on and over itself.

G

Gāyatrī Mantra

Is: “*Oṃ bhūr bhuvah svaḥ, tat savitur vareṇyam, bhargo devasya dhīmahi, dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt*”, the *Rig Veda* (10:16:3). There are many translations of the *Gāyatrī Mantra*; it is translated on the Satyananda Yoga website as: “We meditate on that which is eternal, that light of wisdom and truth which permeates all realms of experience; the creative principal manifesting through the radiance of consciousness. The light which bestows wisdom, bliss, eternal life is the quintessence of everything and leads us to illumination” (http://www.satyananda.net/Etcetera/common_mantras.php:1).

Ghee

Is clarified butter - that is the butter oil without the lactose and other solids. It is used in Indian cooking and frequently used in *Pujas* (religious ritual). *Ghee* is said to have been created by Lord *Brahma* when he rubbed his hands together over a fire to create his children. It is now used in fire ceremonies or *havens* to symbolise the re-enactment of creation.

Guṇas

The constituent qualities of *prakṛti* - *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* - they are said to be the three elemental forces out of which all matter is formed. The three *guṇas*, (strands or qualities) are a triad of forces known as *sattva* (beingness), *rajas* (dynamic principle) and *tamas* (darkness or inertia), that

Guṇapariṇāma

The transformation of the unmanifest into the manifest through the processes of the *guṇas*.

H

Halprin Method or Life/Art Process

The dancer, movement artist, and movement therapist Anna Halprin began to develop her Life/Art process in the 1960's after working with Fritz Perls (founder of Gestalt therapy), Moshe Feldenkrais (Awareness through movement), Carl Rogers (Person-

Centered therapy), and Thomas Gordon (confluent education). From these collaborations she began to create the Life/Art process, which bridges the fields of dance/movement, art, performance, somatics, psychology and education. This process works with individual's life experiences using multimodal arts to help them engage in creative self-development.

Havan (Hindi, Sanskrit *Havana* or *Homa* (used in Southern India))

A fire ceremony, usually performed in and around a *havan kuṇḍa* (fire pit). *Mantras* are recited over the fire, and certain sacred objects are put into it such as rice, flowers, *ghee*, milk, yoghurt, incense and fruit. It is a purifying ritual and can be done to cleanse the adherents performing the ritual, for others, or for the surrounding area.

The hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis, (LHPA)

Is also known as the HPA or HTPA axis. The LHPA is a complex set of interactions between the hypothalamus, the pituitary gland, and the adrenal glands. It is a major part of the neuroendocrine system that controls reactions to stress and other bodily processes including digestion, immunity, mood, emotion, sexuality, and energy storage and supply.

I

Indriyas

The five senses or sense organs.

Ineinander

Merleau-Ponty uses the German word *ineinander* (into or inside one another) in his discussion of time and reversibility to resolve the potential dichotomy in his theories of *flesh* and reversibility. The *ineinander* indicates the intersection and interweaving which releases each side from its opposition to the other.

J

Japa

Or recitation (of *mantra*) is an ancient practice that grew out of the meditative recitation of sacred *Vedic* texts.

Jīva

Life or alive, *jīva* roughly corresponds to the psyche, it is the individuated self (*jīva-ātman*) as opposed to the transcendental Self (*parama-ātman*).

K

Kaivalya

Kaivalya is often also translated as the aloneness of seeing', however, Feuerstein (1990) characterises *kaivalya* as both the 'aloneness of seeing' and as the "'involution' (*pratiprasava*) of the primary constituents (*guṇas*) of Nature, which have lost all purpose for the Self that has recovered its transcendental autonomy" (1990, p. 164).

Kāla

Kāla or time is a *dharma* (a form or quality) that is both an "'ultimate' on the level of sense-perception and the cognition derived from it and also [a] nonultimate on the level of the reality which emerges after the *gunas* collapse into themselves" (Klostermaier 1984, p. 208).

Kāla-atīta or *kālātīta*

S/he who has transcended time.

Karma Yoga

Karma Yoga is the 'Yoga of Action' - *Karma* translates as actions or deeds, and *Karma* yogins perform selfless service, in their yoga schools, ashrams, for their teacher, *Guru*, and community.

Karma or Karman

Or action of which there are three kinds: *sāttvika-karman* or actions that are prescribed by tradition; *rājasa-karman*, action performed from the ego for pleasure; *tāmasa-karman*, action performed by a confused person.

A further meaning of *karma/karman* is ‘ritual act’, or the moral force of one’s thoughts, words, deeds and actions. This meaning of *karma/karman* relates to fate and the way in which one’s actions in the past and present impact the present and future.

Kirtan or kīrtana

Chanting or singing - is ‘call and response’ singing or chanting of Hindu devotional songs and mantras. Unlike the singing of *bhajans*, *kirtan* uses shorter verses and more repetition; both are generally accompanied by the harmonium, drums, and hand symbols. *Kirtan* is often part of *Bhakti* or devotional Yoga, and many *kirtan* are sung in praise of particular deities.

Körper

The *Körper* or physical body is aligned with the *leib* the ‘lived body’, with the *Leib* being the way that the lived body expresses itself in the world.

Kośa

Or sheaths – there is a taxonomy of the five *kośas* or the *pañca-kośa*, which moves from the most gross outer sheath constituted by food (*annamayakośa*), to the breath body the (*prāṇamayakośa*), the mind body (*manomayakośa*), consciousness body, (*vijñānamayakośa*) and lastly the most subtle and inner most sheath the bliss body or (*ānandamayakośa*). This system is conflated with the principle that the bodily system comprises both a gross (*sthūlaśarīra*) and a subtle body (*sūkṣma-śarīra*).

Kriyā

Act, action or rite.

Kriyā Anusthana

Kriyā is action and *anuṣṭhāna* the constant remembrance of God, the *Kriyā anuṣṭhāna* is a sequence of meditative yoga exercises.

Kṣaṇa

The smallest indivisible moment of time.

L

Laghu-Yoga-VAsiṣṭha

A text based on the philosophical system of *Advaita Vedanta*, ascribed to Sage *Valmiki*. It takes the form of a conversation between *Valmiki* and the God *Sri Rāma*, who is asking *Valmiki* philosophical questions about life, death and suffering.

Lebenswelt

The phenomenological concept of the *lebenswelt* or ‘lifeworld’ was introduced by Edmund Husserl (1970/1954) in his *The crisis of European sciences and transcendental phenomenology*. In broad terms it is all material reality that is self-evident. The phenomenologist Scott Warren (1984) defines the *lebenswelt* as the preconceptual foundation of all thought and existence.

Legein

A term used by Martin Heidegger in his thesis on language which loosely means a ‘gathering and laying down’.

Leib

The lived-body, as it was developed by Husserl and then Merleau-Ponty. This body “reveals the deeper significance of corporeality as generative principle” (Leder 1990, p.5).

M

Madhu

Literally - honey, or sweet product, and figuratively ‘the effect’.

Mahāmṛtyuṃjaya Mantra¹

The *mahāmṛtyuṃjaya mantra*, is a verse from the *Yajurveda* dedicated to Lord *Śiva*, the recitation of this *mantra* is thought to be life restoring. The *mantra* is as follows:

Tryambakam yajāmahe sugandhiṃ puṣṭi-vardhanam, urvārukam iva bandhanān mṛtyor mukṣīya mā'mrtāt – “We bow to thee three-eyed Lord (*Śiva*) who is full of sweet fragrance, who nourishes human beings. May he free me from the bondage of births and deaths, just as the ripe cucumber is separated from the vine, and may I be fixed in immortality” (Devanananda 1999, p. 63).

Manas

Lower mind.

Manomaya kośa

The mental body or sheath - Yoga conceives of the mind as an incorporeal body or sheath (*kośa*), which is composed of *manas*, the instinctive mind; *ahaṃkāra*, the sense of I-ness; *citta*, memory and *buddhi*, higher mind.

Mantra

Mantras are sounds, syllables, words or groups of words which when pronounced correctly, and repeated, are thought to be transformative. The immaterial vibrations they produce through recitation are said to link the practitioner with the divine. The *Guru Mantra* is a specific series of words (in the Vedic tradition they are generally *Sanskrit*) given by the *Guru* or teacher to the adherent.

Mauna

Silence, the *Muni* is the silent man or monk.

Mind-body

The term the mind-body suggests – a ‘whole self’, in which the mind and body are inextricably linked, what affects, benefits, changes, or hurts one does the same to the other. It is also used to describe the physical action of the mind on the body, especially the mode in which a thought can cause an action, or the interrelationship between physical and mental health. The term the mind-body, indicates the psychosomatic complex or interconnection of the mind and body, as suggested by the findings from interdisciplinary sciences such as psychoneuroimmunology, which studies the interaction between psychological processes and the nervous and immune systems.

Mindful Mindfulness

Mindfulness meditation (*smṛti*) as it is understood in *Theravada Buddhism* and also known as insight meditation – it is the seventh element of the Noble Eightfold Path, and in general terms is a calm state of consciousness in which the individual is aware of all aspects of the present moment as they are in inhabiting. Therapeutic mindfulness, which is drawn from the insight practices has developed over the past thirty years in medical settings, trains individuals to regulate their attention so that it remains in the present (not past, or future) and maintains orientation of ‘acceptance’, to all that is being experienced. Mindfulness is described by Jon Kabat-Zinn one of the founders of the mindfulness pain and stress reduction technique as: paying attention in the present moment non-judgmentally.

Mokṣa

Or liberation is defined by the Yoga scholar Georg Feuerstein (1990) as a shift in consciousness in which states of non-duality are experienced. It is the “dissolution of the mind upon the obliteration of all aspirations” (Feuerstein 1990, p. 220).

Movement Ritual

A group of exercises developed by Anna Halprin to stretch the body and develop bodily awareness. Influenced by Feldenkris and Yoga, *Movement Ritual* is a rhythmic practice that lasts about thirty minutes and consists of a sequence that starts with the individual standing and swinging their limbs and finishes with stretching exercises on the ground. The emphasis is on ‘mindful movement’, using the weight of the limbs to achieve the movements so as to employ the least force.

N

Nāḍi Śodhana

A *prāṇāyāma* (breath control) exercise, also described as alternate nostril breathing in which the participant concentrates on breathing in through their left nostril, closing the left and breathing out through their right, then in through their right and out through their left, this completes one sequence.

Neuroanatomy

Examines the organs and processes of the nervous system.

Neuroendocrinology

Studies the interactions between the nervous system and the endocrine system.

Nirguṇa

Or unqualified or transcendental reality as opposed to qualified or material existence.

Nirodha

Restriction, or cessation - *nirodha* has four levels of restriction: 1. *vṛtti-nirodha*, cessation or restriction of the fluctuations of the mind 2. *Pratyaya-nirodha*, restriction of presentational ideas 3. *Samskāra-nirodha*, restriction of *samskāra*'s (dynamic imprints in the individual's psychic life) 4. *Sarva-nirodha*, complete restriction.

Niyamas

Or restraint. The *Yoga Sūtra (II.32)* outlines the five *niyamas* or constituent practices, which are purity (*śauca*), contentment (*saṃtoṣa*), asceticism (*tapas*), study (*svādhyāya*), and devotion to God (*īśvara-praṇidhāna*) (Feuerstein 1990, p. 241).

P

Parama-ātman

Transcendental ground-of-being, or supreme self.

Patanjali's Yoga-Sūtras

The *Yoga-sūtras* are a foundational yoga text written by the Sage Patanjali in the 2nd century BCE (this date is contested). They are divided into four books or chapters and contain 196 aphorisms, these are the *Samādhi Pada* (51 *sutras*) in which yoga is initially defined and then the yogic means to *samādhi* (bliss); the *Sādhana Pada* (55 *sutras*) in which *Kriyā Yoga* (yoga of action) and *Aṣṭāṅga Yoga* the eight-limbed or *Rāja Yoga* are defined; the *Vibhūti Pada* (56 *sutras*) which describes the supranormal powers or *siddhis* that can be attained by yoga and warns against focusing on attaining

these powers and lastly the *Kaivalya Pada* (34 *sutras*), which describes the liberation that can be found through Yoga when the transcendental Self is realized.

Prakṛti

Nature or creation, *prakṛti* is also translated as ‘she who brings forth’ and is understood to be the transcendental ground of Nature and all of its manifest forms. In Yoga metaphysics *prakṛti* (female) and *puruṣa* (male) exist in a formless harmony, until there is a disturbance, which unsettles *prakṛti* and initiates the manifestation of all forms.

Pralaya

A state of quiescence, sometimes used to describe the state of equilibrium of the *guṇas* as they rest in *prakṛti* before they are disturbed by *puruṣa*.

Prāṇa

Breath or life force - an immaterial force said to animate all life forms. *Prāṇa* is one of the five organs of vitality or sensation: *prāṇa* breath, *vac* speech, *cakṣus* sight, *śrotra* hearing, and *manas* thought. *Prāṇa* is comparable to the Chinese notion of *Qi*, and is a central concept in *Āyurveda* and Yoga where it is believed to flow through a network of fine subtle channels called *nāḍis*.

Prāṇāyāma

Breath control or breath practices, is the fourth limb of the eight fold yoga path detailed in Patanjali’s *Yoga Sūtras*. *Prāṇa* is breath or vital force and *āyāma* extension or control, the aim in extending and controlling the breath is to control the movement of the mind. *Prāṇāyāma* is a yoga exercise in which variations on breathing in, out, and retention of the breath, are used to still the mind and often as a preparation for meditation. While *prāṇa* is not air, it is in part taken in when breathing. The purpose of *prāṇāyāma* is not only to control the breath as a means to still the mind, it is also used to direct the *prāṇa* for various purposes including healing.

Prasāda (prasād, Hindi)

Or a ‘gracious gift’, can be a number of things though it is generally food and frequently sweets. For it to become *prasāda* it is first offered to a deity, who is thought to partake

of it, and by doing so imbuing it with his/her essence. It is then said to be a holy substance and is offered to participants of various celebrations and ceremonies.

Pratiprasava

Involution

Pratyāhāra

Sense withdrawal

Psychoneuroimmunology (PNI)

Studies the interaction between psychological processes and the nervous and immune systems. PNI initially detailed the links between mind and body through its research into the mechanisms that create brain immunity effects, which this interdisciplinary science terms the ‘immune-brain loop’.

Psychosomatology

Developed out of interdisciplinary exchanges between psychoanalysis and medical science, and studies the relationship between communication and memory systems.

Pūjā

Pūjā or ‘adoration’ can take many forms, though all are ceremonies in which offerings are made to the Divine, these include flowers, incense, water, grains, and sanctified liquids including *ghee*.

(The) Purāṇas

Are a collection of Hindu religious texts, which narrate genealogies of important mythical beings, Hindu cosmology and philosophy.

Puruṣa

Puruṣa or pure consciousness, is one of two primordial foundations in Yoga’s cosmology, it is often associated with the male and is formless, transcendental, pure and unchanging. *Puruṣa* with *prakṛti* (or Nature) are the primary cause of phenomenal existence

Q

Qi

Often translated as air, breath, or energy flow. *Qi* is frequently compared to the Yogic concept of *prāṇa*. Theories of traditional Chinese medicine propose that the body has natural patterns of *Qi* that circulate in channels or meridian lines throughout the body, and when the passage of *Qi* is blocked it can cause illness.

Qigong

An ancient Chinese meditation practice that cultivates *Qi* uses slow movement synchronised with the breath, to stimulate the flow of *Qi* in the body.

S

Sādhana

Spiritual practice or ‘spiritual exertion’ carried out to achieve a specific spiritual goal. Hindu and Buddhist traditions have many types of *sādhana*s including the chanting of mantra, *pūjā* performed for a specific God, mortification of the body and *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma*, and meditation practices.

Saguṇa-brahman

Is the qualified absolute or the phenomenal dimension of reality composed of the three *guṇas*.

Sākṣin

Witness consciousness

Samagree or Sāmagrī

A combination of dried herbs (and often powdered cow dung), used in Havanas (fire ceremonies). Common herbs used are: *katsuri* (*kastūrī*), musk; *keshar* (*kesara*), rotleria tincotira; *agar* (*agaru*), aquilaria agellocha; *tagar* (*tagara*), teberamutan caronaria; *sheveta chandan* (*śveta candana*), white sandalwood powder; *ilayachi*, reronia elephantum; *jayphala* (*jātīphala*), nutmeg; *javitri*, Mace.

Samādhi

Enstasy, which is the final stage of the yoga path, is a type of ecstasy that is said to arise in complete sensory inhibition when the adherent experiences a ‘oneness’, or a merging of the subject and objects. There are two kinds of *samādhi*, the first is *samprajñāta-samādhi*, or *samādhi* with an ‘objective prop’ and the second, *asamprajñāta* the acognitive or supracognitive *samādhi* (Whicher 1998(a)).

Sāṃkhya

Is thought to be one of the oldest of the six schools of Hindu philosophy, although there are no longer thought to be any purely *Sāṃkhya* schools currently existing, its influence is said to be most strongly felt in classical Yoga philosophy.

Sāṃkhya philosophy

One of the six schools of Hindu philosophy.

Saṃsāra

Or flow, is portrayed as the wheel of life which continues to turn through spiritual ignorance (*avidyā*). Its six spokes are virtue (*dharma*), vice (*adharma*), pleasure (*sukha*), pain (*duḥkha*), attachment (*rāga*), and aversion (*dveṣa*). *Saṃsāra* as the phenomenal world is the opposite to the transcendental world, or *Brahman*. Its translation as flow indicates that phenomenal or *saṃsāric* existence is impermanent as it is composed of a constant flux of events. *Saṃsāra* is also often used to denote the suffering of the phenomenal world.

Samyama

A constraint or the constant practice of concentration.

Saṃskāra

Activator - the general understanding of *saṃskāra* is that of ritual and it is often applied to rites of passage. However in Yoga it also means the dynamic imprints on the individual’s psychic life, the indelible imprints left by daily experience on the subconscious.

Samyoga

Correlation.

Samnyāsī

Translates as ‘putting or throwing down’, is the yoga adherent. The male *saṃnyāsī* or female *saṃnyāsini* renounce the ‘worldly’ life and take vows of chastity and poverty. Traditionally a man (sometimes a women), would renounce his/her life as a householder at about the age of sixty and leave their family to become a wandering *saṃnyāsī*. He/she might enter into extended periods of meditation in remote forests or caves, or move from town to town, not staying longer than three days. In a number of the Yogic traditions that have travelled to the West, this more conventional understanding of the *saṃnyāsī/saṃnyāsini* is changing.

Satsaṅga

The ‘company of the true’ or ‘relationship to the real’ - *satsaṅga* is generally a gathering of yoga practioners who engage together in activities such as silent meditation, meditative chanting of mantras, and spiritual lectures.

Satkāryavāda

Theory of causation

Sāyujya

Union.

Śakti

The animating, creative principal in all existence. *Śakti* is envisioned as both, pure energy in and outside of the adherent’s body, and the personification of the divine feminine. *Śakti* is inseparable from *Śiva* the personification of the static male form and a part of the triadic principal gods, *Śiva*, *Viṣṇu* and *Brahmā*.

Śarīra

The whole psychosomatic complex of body, mind and heart

Siddhis or Vibhūtis

Or accomplishment - in Yoga the *siddhis* are paranormal powers that can be attained through repeated experience of *samādhi* or ecstasy. The *Liṅga-Purāṇa* (1.9.30ff) details a range of supernormal powers from the “ability to make oneself bulky or lean, prophesize or see the future to the power of producing fire from the body, to the magical ability of assuming any form at will” (Feuerstein 1990, pp. 345, 346).

Stotra

A hymn of praise, one common form is to recite a certain number of names of a chosen deity, such as the *Viṣṇu Sahasranāma*, the thousand names of *Viṣṇu*.

Sūtra

Literally thread or line, is a concise often scriptural aphorism, in Yoga it is Pātanjali’s *Yoga-Sūtras* that are often associated with this word.

Svaprakāśatva

The self-luminosity of consciousness.

T

Tādātmya

Sameness, identity of nature or character.

Tapas

Austerity.

Tarka

Reflection.

Tattva

Translates as principal or primary element. In *Śaiva* philosophy (worship of the god *Śiva*) there are 36 *tattvas*, consisting of the five *Mahābhūtas*, the five material elements; the five *tanmātras*, mediums of the senses; the five *karmendriyas*, organs of action; the five *jñānendriyas*, the sense organs; *antaḥkarana*, five ‘inner instruments’ or

aspects of mind; *sat kañcukas*, six ‘limitations’ to the sense of space, and the *śuddha tattvas*, five aspects of the divine consciousness.

Tree pūjā

This is ritualised worship of a tree in which the tree is generally offered a flower, incense, light (oil lamp) and water while *mantras* are recited.

Tri-guṇa-sāmya-avasthā

The state of equilibrium of the three *guṇas*.

U

Upaniṣads

Philosophical texts that found the Hindu religion. There are over 200 *Upaniṣads* though the oldest are thought to be the most important and are termed the *Mukhya* (main) *Upaniṣads*.

V

Vidyā

Knowledge.

Vṛttis

There are a number of meanings to *vṛtti* or whirl, such as activity, mode of life, livelihood, and rule. However, in Yoga the term specifically means fluctuations of phenomenal consciousness, and is important in a central aphorism in Yoga – *yogaś citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ* – ‘Yoga is the restriction of the fluctuations of consciousness’ (Feuerstein 1990).

Y

Yajña

Broadly *Yajña* means worship, devotion to God; it can indicate many different ways of worshipping the Divine including *Havana* the fire ceremony.

Yama

Is restraint and the first limb of the eightfold yogic path taught by Patanjali, which is outlined in his *Yoga Sūtra (II.30)*, where he introduces five *yamas*: nonharming (*ahimsā*), truthfulness (*satya*), nonstealing (*asteya*), charity (*brahmacarya*), and greedlessness (*aparigraha*) (Feuerstein 1990).

Yantras



Visual symbols, representing various, often spiritual themes, which are used as meditation tools to support focus. *Yantra* is from the root *yam*: to restrain, control, subdue, *-tra* is a suffix expressive of the instrument or means - also used in *tantra* and *mantra*. *Yantras* can be one geometric shape such as the cube, and they can be made up of a series of geometric symbols such as the famous *Śrī Yantra*, which represents the Goddess *Lakṣmi* and/or the three worlds.

Yātrā

Procession, journey or pilgrimage.

Yoga Nidrā

Is often translated as ‘yoga sleep’; it has two primary aspects, firstly as method of relaxation and as a *sādhana* or spiritual practice in which the adherent becomes immersed in ‘direct communion’ with the Divine. Practitioners usually lie on their backs with their arms and feet slightly apart and their eyes closed. They then rotate their awareness through each body part, as they are named in a particular sequence, often starting with the right side of the body.

Yogin

Is a male practitioner of Yoga, and *Yoginī* a female practitioner.

Yogyatā

Pre-established harmony, fitness, competence, worthiness, qualification etc.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: TABLE 1 - OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES IN STAGE ONE OF THE FIELDWORK

DATE	LOCATION	ACTIVITY/OUTCOMES
<u>Prior to Stage 1</u> Feb – Oct 2008	Initial engagement with theory. UNSW, Sydney, Australia Identified relevant primary and secondary sources Ethics Identified relevant retreats	Establishment of methodological position and literature review completed Engaged primary and secondary sources Ethics approval granted 31/03/2009. Protocols at each field works site confirmed. Themes identified for open-ended interviewing
<u>2008</u> 14 th – 17 th Nov.	The Sanctuary, Mission Beach, Northern Queensland, Australia	Personal Retreat: experimentation with phenomenological and autoethnographic methods. Analysis of data <u>Outcomes:</u> Identified primary phases of retreating, created provisional structure for a retreat case-study, consolidated research questions.
<u>2009</u> 18 th – 25 th Jan.	Wild Mountains Environmental Educational Trust, Rathdowney, Queensland, Australia	Participant observation, including: morning meditation classes, afternoon and evening programs. These programs included group discussions and multimodal arts activities. <u>Outcomes:</u> Participant observation and field diary. Growing awareness of the impacts on the findings of the varying participant observer roles. Interviews
23 rd – 27 th March	Whatipu Lodge, Department of Conservation Reserve, Pararaha Valley, Waitakere Ranges, North Island, New Zealand	Participant observation in multimodal arts practices including, meditative movement exercises; Halprin's 'scoring' exercises, process drawing, and group discussions. Conducted in-depth interviews with retreat participants living in Auckland.
28 th – 31 st March	Auckland, New Zealand, co-researchers' homes and hotels	<u>Outcomes:</u> Participant observation and field diary. Growing awareness of the impact of participant observation on the research process. Interviews
7 th – 9 th April	YIDL Retreat Center, Dungog, Hunter Valley, NSW, Australia	Participation in and observation of the <i>Kriya Anusthan</i> meditation practice, starting at 6am and finishing at 5pm. Attended evening program or Satsang, lecture by Swamiji. <u>Outcomes:</u> Participant observation and field diary.
21 st – 26 th April	Satyananda Yoga Retreat Center, Mangrove Creek, NSW, Australia	Participant observation at the <i>Yoga Ecology</i> retreat/workshop, early morning yoga, meditation and <i>Havan</i> , morning theory and philosophy classes, Tree <i>Puja</i> , organic gardening and evening <i>Havan</i> , evening sessions including videos and <i>kirtan</i> . <u>Outcomes:</u> Participant observation, interviews field diary.

APPENDIX 2: TABLE 2 - OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES IN STAGE TWO OF THE FIELDWORK: APRIL – DECEMBER 2009

DATE	LOCATION	ACTIVITY/OUTCOME
2009 April – Oct.	Australia UNSW, Sydney.	<p><u>Pre-Trip:</u> Contacted and corresponded with Dr Chapple, (LMU), Los Angeles; Dr Jorge Ferrer, CIIS, Dr Dean Elias, St Marys, San Francisco, and Dr James Morley, Ramapo College, New Jersey, USA.</p> <p>Emailed prospective co-researchers suggested by academics, then used snowballing to access others. Applied for and received UNSW Faculty fieldwork funding. Applied for and received ethics approval. Organised travel and accommodation in the USA</p> <p><u>Outcomes:</u> Key informants identified and first interviews organised. Fieldtrip funding and ethics approval received. Travel and accommodation booked</p>
7 th – 31 st Oct.	<p>Los Angeles LMU</p> <p>Sivananda Yoga Centre, Los Angeles</p> <p>Venice High School Learning Garden</p> <p>Exhale Mindbody Spa</p> <p>Seniors Yoga, City of Santa Monica</p> <p>UCLA’s Mindful Awareness Research Center</p> <p>Hill Street Centre,</p>	<p>Conducted participant observation and interviews, LMU, attended Dr Chapple’s undergraduate World Religions, the graduate Comparative Mysticism class, and graduate Sanskrit classes.</p> <p>Sourced and read Dr Chapple’s students’ essays.</p> <p>Visited the LMU Yoga Extension Office.</p> <p>Followed up interview leads, Los Angeles, San Francisco, New Jersey, New York.</p> <p>Organized interview sessions and ongoing travel.</p> <p>Attended community development activities at the Learning Garden, Venice High School, including a yoga class. Attended <i>satsang</i> and classes at the Sivananda Yoga Center. Viewed relevant student essays. Attended classes with Dr Chapple, Dr Harper, John Doyle. Attended private meditation class with Dr Harper and viewed at her suggestion the video <i>Doing Time Doing Vipassana</i>, 1997.</p> <p>Attended Yin Yoga class at <i>Exhale MindBody Spa</i></p> <p>Jasmine Lieb’s government funded seniors’ class in Santa Monica.</p> <p>Attended class and conducted interview at UCLA’s Mindful Awareness Research Center (MARC), a part of the Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior, UCLA, LA. Attended Dr Chapple’s Sunday morning <i>Yoga Sūtra Sādhana</i> classes at the Hill Street Center, Santa Monica. Monthly Eco-Yoga practice at the Church in Ocean Park, Santa Monica.</p>

	Santa Monica	<p>Attended interfaith meeting at LMU. Attended interfaith celebration University of Southern California.</p> <p><u>Outcomes:</u> 29 interviews conducted. Fieldwork diary collated Travel to and interviews in San Francisco organized. Relevant student essays viewed. Participant observation and fieldwork diary.</p>
1 st – 6 th Nov.	<p>San Francisco CIIS, San Francisco, USA.</p> <p>St Marys College of California, San Francisco.</p> <p>The Institute of Noetic Sciences (IONS), Petaluma, California.</p>	<p>Met with and interviewed Dr Jorge Ferrer and Dr Brendan Collins.</p> <p>Met with and interviewed, Dr Dean Elias, Dr Ken Otter and Dr Kathleen Taylor. Dr Elias also organized a group interview with five of his graduate students in his own home. (No interviews were conducted on campus).</p> <p>Interviewed Dr Cassandra Vieten, director of research at the Institute of Noetic Sciences.</p> <p><u>Outcomes:</u> Conducted 11 interviews, participant- observation and fieldwork diary.</p>
7 th Nov -19 th Dec.	<p>New Jersey Ramapo College, New Jersey, USA</p> <p>Bermuda</p> <p>New York City Sivananda Yoga Centre, NYC</p> <p>Jivamukti Yoga School, NYC</p>	<p>Met with Professor James Morley discussed participant-observation process, conducted three in-depth interviews, over the course of the fieldwork.</p> <p>Conducted participant-observation and interviews on the Ramapo campus with academics, and students in the Yoga psychology course.</p> <p>Attended Dr Morley’s Yoga psychology class, which included yoga theory and practice.</p> <p>Attended private yoga class with Dr Morley. Conducted two interviews by skype.</p> <p>Attended and presented at the 8th International Transformative Learning Conference, Bermuda, 18th – 20th November, 2009.</p> <p>Conducted two interviews: with the manager of the Sivananda Yoga Farm, and one of the yoga teachers at the NYC centre. Conducted two interviews at a co-researcher’s home and at a restaurant.</p> <p>Attended Sunday morning Bhakti Yoga class, <i>Jivamukti Yoga School</i>, NYC, facilitated by a co-researcher.</p> <p><u>Outcomes:</u> 23 interviews conducted, 18 in New Jersey and 5 in New York City. Participant observation and fieldwork diary.</p>

APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW DEMOGRAPHICS

LOCATION	GENDER	AGE	PSEUDONYM	TYPE OF INTERVIEW
First Stage Fieldwork, New Zealand and Australia				
Co-researcher's home, Queensland, Australia	Female	67	Annie	In-depth
Café, Queensland, Australia	Female	35	Bronwyn	In-depth
Sydney by Skype to Queensland	Male	51	Paul	In-depth
Researcher's home, Sydney, Australia	Female	46	Jenny	In-depth
Workshop Centre, Whatipu, New Zealand	Female	37	Robin	In-depth
Workshop centre, Whatipu, New Zealand	12 Females, 1 Male		Group Interview (13)	Short
Co-researcher's home, Auckland, New Zealand	Female	53	Ruth	In-depth
Co-researcher's home, Auckland	Female	49	Judith	In-depth
Co-researcher's hotel, Auckland	Female	36	Susan	In-depth
Co-researcher's home, Auckland	Male	66	Paul	In-depth
Co-researcher's home, Sydney, Australia	Female	49	Megan	In-depth
			Sub-total: 23	
Second Stage Fieldwork, USA				
Los Angeles				
LMU, Los Angeles, USA	Male	61	Dr Christopher Chapple	2x In-depth
LMU, Los Angeles	Female	59	Mary	2x short
LMU, Los Angeles	Female	57	Kate	Short
LMU Los Angeles	Female	45	Agnes	In-depth
Researcher's accommodation, Los Angeles	Female	43	Catherine	In-depth
Hotel, Los Angeles	Male	53	Bruce	In-depth
LMU, Los Angeles	Female	33	Laura	In-depth
Co-researcher's home, Los Angeles	Female	56	Debra	In-depth
LMU, Los Angeles	Male	52	Neville	Short
Restaurant, Los Angeles	Female	66	Gloria	In-depth
Restaurant, Los Angeles	Male	71	Justin	In-depth
Researcher's accommodation, Los Angeles	Male	61	Roger	In-depth
LMU, Los Angeles	Male	42	Jason	2x In-depth
LMU, Los Angeles	Male	51	Josh	Short
Council Building, Los Angeles	Female	69	Beth	Short
Council Building, Los Angeles	Female	66	Janice	Short
Co-researcher's home, Los Angeles	Male	55	Trevor	In-depth
Co-researcher's home, Los Angeles	Female	56	Cynthia	In-depth
LMU, Los Angeles	Male	22	Mike	In-depth
LMU, Los Angeles	Female	26	Sharon	In-depth
LMU, Los Angeles	Female	27	Yumi	Medium
LMU, Los Angeles	Female	24	Sonja	Short
LMU, Los Angeles	Male	24	Morris	Medium
LMU, Los Angeles	Female	51	Heather	In-depth
Learning Garden, Los Angeles	Female	60	Florence	In-depth

Learning Garden, Los Angeles	Female	34	Eunice	In-depth
LMU, Los Angeles	Female	41	Angelica	In-depth
Restaurant, Los Angeles	Male	19	Tim	In-depth
LMU, Los Angeles	Male	45	George	In-depth
			Sub-total: 29	
<i>San Francisco</i>				
Restaurant, San Francisco	Female	48	Linda	In-depth
Restaurant, San Francisco	Male	54	Dr Ken Otter	In-depth
Restaurant, San Francisco	Male	63	Larissa	In-depth
Co-researcher's home, San Francisco	Male	62	Dr Dean Ellias	In-depth
Co-researcher's home, San Francisco	Male	46	Dr Jorge Ferrer	In-depth
Restaurant, San Francisco	Female	58	Susan	In-depth
Co-researcher's home, San Francisco	4 Females, 1 Male		Group (5)	Short (each)
			Sub-total: 11	
<i>New Jersey</i>				
Ramapo, New Jersey	Male	53	Dr James Morley	In-depth x2
Ramapo, New Jersey	Female	43	Isabella	In-depth
Ramapo, New Jersey	Male	56	Ethan	In-depth by phone
Ramapo, New Jersey	Female	52	Hannah	In-depth
Ramapo, New Jersey	Female	20	Alicia	In-depth
Ramapo, New Jersey	Female	20	Baden	Medium
Ramapo, New Jersey	Female	47	Casey	In-depth
Ramapo, New Jersey	Female	21	Eartha	In-depth
Ramapo, New Jersey	Female	21	Mae	Medium
Ramapo, New Jersey	Female	23	Sabine	In-depth
Ramapo, New Jersey	Female	21	Kasey	Medium
Ramapo, New Jersey	Female	22	Irania	Medium
Ramapo, New Jersey	Female	20	Lace	Medium
Ramapo, New Jersey	Male	21	Eamon	Medium
Ramapo, New Jersey	Male	24	Cadin	In-depth
Ramapo, New Jersey	Female	23	Macalla	Medium
Ramapo, New Jersey	Female	20	Tabatha	Medium
Ramapo, New Jersey	Male	21	Damian	Medium
			Sub-total: 18	
<i>New York City</i>				
New York City	Female	32	Sabre	In-depth Skype
Co-researcher's home, New York City	Female	46	Gabby	In-depth
Restaurant, New York City	Male	49	Lachlan	In-depth
Sivananda Ashram, New York City	Female	28	Lafa	In-depth
New York City	Male	46	Ian	In-depth phone
			Sub-total: 5	
			TOTAL: 86	

Note: In this thesis I refer to the participants in this study as 'co-researchers' see chapter one for explanation. All of these co-researchers were contemplative practitioners though specific information about their religious affiliation was not recorded in the interviews. The closest I can come to commenting about their religious or spiritual orientation is to suggest that many of them have eclectic practices, which can be termed 'Self Religions'. Please see Chapter Five for further discussion of this phenomenon.

APPENDIX 4: AN OVERVIEW OF THE IN-DEPTH, OPEN-ENDED INTERVIEWING USED IN THIS STUDY

This project used participant observation and in-depth, open-ended interviewing, often described as “conversation[s] with a purpose” (Holloway, 1997, p. 94). This and other aspects of the methodology are detailed in Chapter One, which also outlines how the open-ended interviews became at times like a contemplative practice. Because of the contemplative and phenomenological approach taken in this project an interview questionnaire was not used, however certain themes framed the interviews, each of which lasted between 30-75 minutes. An understanding of the use of ‘themes’, and the way that rich data can result from this kind of approach are detailed in the educational philosopher Peter Covington’s definition:

Open-ended or unstructured interviews offer only a limited amount of structure by suggesting a theme or area of discussion. The role of the interviewer is mainly to keep the respondent within the brief of the research and to help tease out what is being asked of them. The result is rich, detailed qualitative material with less bias because the answers given have been chosen by the respondent rather than being suggested by the interviewer. (Covington, 2008, p. 292)

Covington’s definition is useful here though to illustrate the development of the interviewing method developed across the course of the fieldwork I have supplied parts of an interview with Hannah an academic and yoga practitioner at Ramapo College, New Jersey. In this interview I started by introducing my research, and then asked Hannah about her contemplative practice. This lengthy introduction, similar to many of this project’s interviews supported the development of empathy between the co-researchers and me. In this part of the interview with Heather she told me about the way her Yoga practice started, her different teachers, and the yoga schools where she trained. She then spoke of the influence that her yoga practice had on her teaching, and in this, and the earlier introductions, I am listening more than speaking and am being led by her.

At the end of this introductory part of the interview Hannah switched from talking about her yoga practice to the research that has grown out of it:

I’m also doing a study on the yoga school...They have a bunch of students who come for the two hundred hour training. So I have my subjects and I’m just looking at some of the same questions as you. I’m partly just documenting the program and then looking at what kind of effects it has on the students outside of yoga/ inside of yoga –

health-wise, emotional, spiritual. And also then looking, because I'm in teacher education, at the kind of pedagogy that is used. (Interview, 22nd November, 2009)

There was a natural conclusion to this section and when I realised this in the interview I asked: "Have you done any other writing about Yoga?" In answer to this question Hannah talked about the work that she does with minority students in the surrounding school district, and how she teaches these young people to 'control their inner environments' through yoga and meditation. Hannah spoke at length about this aspect of her work and as she did empathy and understanding developed between us as we were 'speaking the same language'. This is one of the positive outcomes of insider research as the interview takes on a life of its own, rather than being led by a set of questions. Below is an example of the section of the interview discussed above, which illustrates the nuances in this exchange:

Hannah: Yeah, for some kids there might be the ones that are enjoying it we just don't know their background but it was a tough group.

Patricia: Yeah, I bet, very rewarding, but very tough!

H: Now I look back at it, I think, 'How did I ever take this on?' But someone who I really love asked me to do it so I said, 'Sure'. I needed places to teach because I was a beginning yoga student so I said, 'Sure, I'll teach'.

P: And what did you do - what sort of postures for example?

H: All the basic postures and a lot of breathing. A whole lot of breathing! I actually had a little thing where I showed them how the diaphragm works. (Interview, 22nd November, 2009)

Hannah then moved from talking about the work that she does with marginalised youth to her teaching at Ramapo College, and this gave me the opportunity to ask about her approach to contemplative education. A fairly long discussion followed where Hannah and I spoke about previous Yoga and teacher training we had done, her formal education, and some of my field work experiences in the US. Again there was a natural conclusion to this section, after which I asked Hannah if she thought contemplative education was transformative. This led to an interesting exchange where Hannah spoke about learning through the body, which started with my disclosure about being a kinaesthetic learner and because of this how difficult I had found certain aspects, of mainstream education:

Patricia: I just feel my whole self shutting down when that starts to happen. So I'm wondering if a part of the transformation, part of what's happening – and I don't think I'm the first person to think this - but is it something to do with that body-mind connection...When you're doing asana and stuff, is there something about that, which is why it can change you?

Hannah: Well in the anatomy portion of the teacher training that I took, my teacher's philosophy was that you have brain in more than just your head. You have brain all over your body, the way we envision thinking is incorrect because it isn't all up here [indicating her head]. Every part of your body has its own ability to think, and some of it is quicker than the brain. So when we say, 'we have a gut feeling', basically our viscera have processed this fear or whatever it is about the situation before the brain and it tells the brain not the brain telling it. (Interview, 22nd November, 2009)

At this stage of the interview a certain level of trust and understanding had developed between us as we spoke about different ways of understanding teaching as an embodied practice. We also talked about our own experiences as teachers and students, and Hannah described the way that her contemplative practice has impacted her pedagogy both in formal and informal educational settings:

Hannah: I find, in my yoga community, people talking about things that are much more important. They are concerned about living what they believe rather than just being able to study it. They actually think about asking questions like: 'Well if I believe in peace in the world, how do I act when I'm confronted? How do I control my own aggressive tendencies or my own reactive tendencies?' It's very different because it's taken from abstract to concrete.

Patricia: And I suppose if you're also living the yogic life, and while you might not be totally locked into the yoga precepts from Patanjali or whatever, but there's still a sense that there's a bit of a moral code.

H: Absolutely.

P: So that's, I think, a part of it as well...And that's another interesting question, what is it about these kinds of practices that lead people to that?

H: What leads people to try to be a better person? That's why I love talking to Jim because we talk about things...he's in psychology, I'm in teaching, and a lot of our intellectual ideas are similar, but we also talk about, 'Wow, was I out of line there?' (Interview, 22nd November, 2009)

This discussion then moved to the impact of Yoga on Hannah's personal life, where she outlined an important finding for this project, which I read as her *feeling* of different modes of being (produced by the *feeling nexus*) combining in the area of her chest:

When I first started doing camel when I came back to yoga, after I'd had kids and everything, it used to make me cry because you're opening your heart up so much. I just couldn't do it without wanting to cry. And it's taken me years to be able to it without crying'. *That's* transformation. Where you learn to physically open up your heart and then what follows is a lot of emotions and stuff. (Interview, 22nd November, 2009)

This topic continued to the end of the interview, as we shared insights from our practices and teaching. Hannah discussed different aspects of her teaching at Ramapo College, and her ideas about introducing somatic contemplative practices into the classroom. The interview finished with her asking:

Who knows if we would have so many ADHD kids if our classrooms were more oriented towards the natural drive to move that kids have? You can keep a kid quiet for so long, but all of that kinetic energy just builds up inside of them. (Interview, 22nd November, 2009)

APPENDIX 5: STAGE ONE FIELDWORK – PERSONAL RETREAT

Before going on this retreat I researched a number of retreat options on www.dharma.org.au and Sydney Insight Mediators: www.siminc.org.au :

When	Where	Type	Teacher(s)	Details
25 January – 1 February 2009	Byron Bay	Insight (Vipassana)	Subhana Barzaghi and Ellen Davison	www.dharma.org.au
25 February - 1 March 2009	Seymour (Melbourne area)	Insight Dialogue	Gregory Kramer	www.dharma.org.au
28 February – 1 March	East Ballina	Natural Mind – meditation and contemplation in nature	Bobbi and John Allan	www.stillnessinaction.net
5-8 March	Southern Highlands (Sydney area)	Insight Dialogue (open retreat)	Gregory Kramer	www.dharma.org.au
9-15 March	Southern Highlands (Sydney area)	Insight Dialogue (for experienced meditators)	Gregory Kramer	www.dharma.org.au
19-23 March	Sydney	Insight Dialogue retreat for psychotherapists	Gregory Kramer	www.dharma.org.au
20-28 March	Perth area	Insight	Guy Armstrong and Sally Clough	www.pimg.org
27-31 March	East Ballina	Dharma Facilitator's Program	Radha Nicholson and Will James	www.dharma.org.au
17-22 April	St Albans, Sydney area	Dharma Study and Facilitation	Subhana Barzaghi	www.dharma.org.au
23-29 April	Adelaide Hills	Recollective Awareness	Jason Siff and Anna Markey	www.dharma.org.au
4-10 May	Sydney area	Recollective Awareness	Jason Siff	www.siminc.org.au
8-11 May	Stuart's Point (south of Coffs Harbour NSW)	Women's retreat	Radha Nicholson assisted by Judy Baderle	www.dharma.org.au (not yet on site)
8-15 May	Daylesford area, Victoria	Insight (Vipassana)	Subhana Barzaghi and Carol Perry	www.dharma.org.au
22 – 26 May	East Ballina (Northern NSW)	Recollective Awareness	Jason Siff and Greg Bantick	www.dharma.org.au
3 - 8 June	Alice Springs	Recollective Awareness	Jason Siff and Jenny Taylor	08 89532776
5-12 June	Byron Bay	Insight (Vipassana)	Subhana Barzaghi and Carol Perry	www.dharma.org.au (not yet on site)

**Personal Retreat, Mission Beach, Northern Queensland, Australia, 14th – 17th
November, 2008**

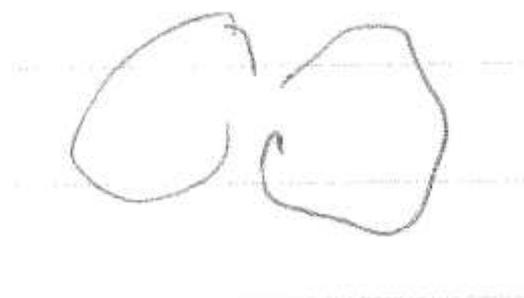
The first stage of the fieldwork was prompted by findings from a personal retreat, in November 2008 at *The Sanctuary*, a retreat center in Mission Beach, Northern Queensland, Australia. I had decided to start the fieldwork by investigating the retreating phenomenon as a form of contemplative adult education. While on this personal retreat I experimented with phenomenological and autoethnographic methods to test them as appropriate methods for this project. During the three days of the retreat I practiced a daily *Bīja mantra*²¹⁶ exercise, meditation, yoga and creative processes including free movement, poetic writing, videoing and drawing.

14th November: I spent the first day walking, meditating, swimming, and feeling confused about ‘what to do’. I felt self-conscious and restless.

Diary notes

How do I feel – go through your body and look for bits where you need more than one mode to ‘feel’ what is happening

*My head is sort of stuck behind my eyes,
pressure, jaw is tense
But my heart is moving energy and there
were moments in mediation where...*



I saw this light and then 2 clouds

I also saw cobwebs that I filmed this morning, kind of it’s like that form and others I see around me is ‘the energy’. I feel as though my head is separate to my body and they’re not joined but there are moments where it starts to happen – movement inside me starts to join up.

What is the gestalt of these modes? Going between mind, body, feelings, spirit - talk about these as modes or?

²¹⁶ This *Bīja Mantra* mediation consists of repeating the ‘seed syllables’ *OM HAM YAM RAM VAM LAM*, while maintaining awareness of certain parts of the body.

15th November: On the second day I decided to concentrate on ‘feeling led’ rather than trying to ‘make something happen’. On the path to the beach I asked which way to turn, and was directed left, I walked to the end of the beach where someone had made a dwelling out of driftwood, which was empty but had a strange watchful presence. Walking back the way I had come, I found a large tree that was split from the base about a third of the way up the trunk, this split was wide at the bottom and curved to a point at the top. I was attracted by this shape in the trunk, which looked like a pair of hips, as I walked closer I saw that the opening looked like a sacred grotto. Moving still closer I noticed a naturally occurring altar, created by a part of the tree, which lay vertically between the two sides of the opening and on top of that there was a fallen red leaf offering, and a slash of white, a type of lichen sacred symbol.

I stayed with the tree for the rest of the day, sitting in front of it, behind it and with my back up against it facing away from the beach. I wrote in my diary: “There is a Divine pattern but I can’t explain or understand it with my analytical mind...something about worshiping the Divine.” I created a small sculpture out of found objects on the beach, which seemed like a microcosmic key to the macrocosm, though I’m not sure how?

On the way back up the hill to *The Sanctuary* I had been looking down concentrating on the steep climb, but looking up there was a flash of iridescent blue-green and there in front of me was a large male Cassowary²¹⁷ with its baby. I backed off without turning away, as I had been advised to do. It was a shock and a gift! That evening I realised I could document the process on the beach as a possible framework for the retreat experience and as the structure for a proposed ‘Arts in Nature’ retreat.

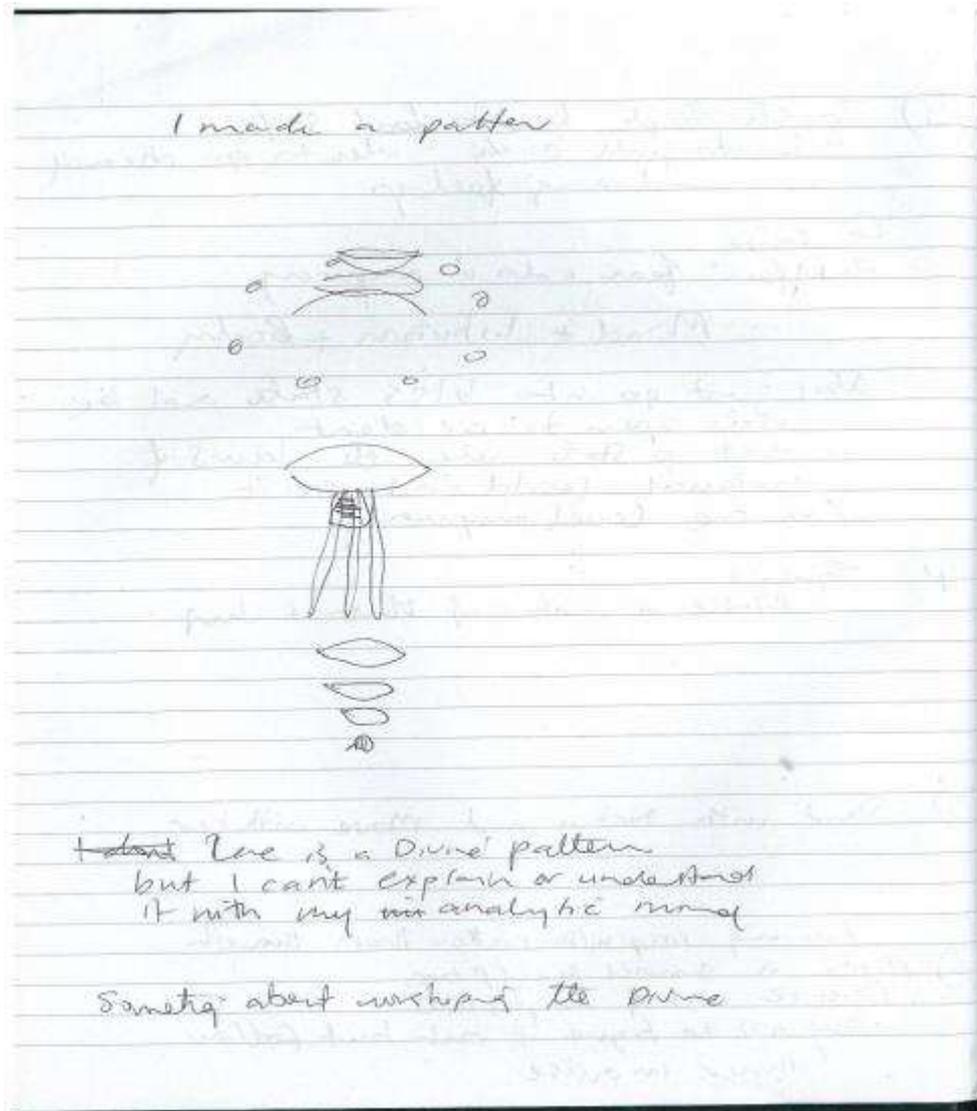
Diary Notes:

The dragonfly is on this beach, it’s the right one to be on. I walk looking for the right spot, where am I led? Then I saw an opening in a tree – like a grotto with an altar inside, and there is an offering, a red leaf. And as though decorated a white splash in the middle, I think it is the oldest tree on the beach and young trees are growing all around it

Then it is a tree I am drawn to – not rocks or water but a beautiful old tree. Its skin bark cracked and gnarled. A temple made of tree and this grotto at its base, shaped like my hips. I

²¹⁷ The Australian or Southern Cassowary is flightless and can range in height from five to six feet; they are omnivorous but mainly eat fruit and are part of the raitie group which includes emus, kiwis and the extinct moa and elephant bird. Cassowarys can run up to 50 kilometres an hour and jump up to 1.5 meters and are said to be dangerous because of their ability to kick.

start the communication/meditation by concentrating on my pelvis and see-feel²¹⁸ the inside of my pelvis as a chalice-shaped body of water. I get up from mediation walk up closer to the tree and see that a small strangler fig has attached itself to the Chalice Tree's trunk and I want to



Drawing of small sand sculpture, 15/11/08

help the tree, so I pull the strangler fig off, then wonder if I have done the right thing. Afterwards I draw an image which I title: "Communicating with the Chalice Tree", and write:

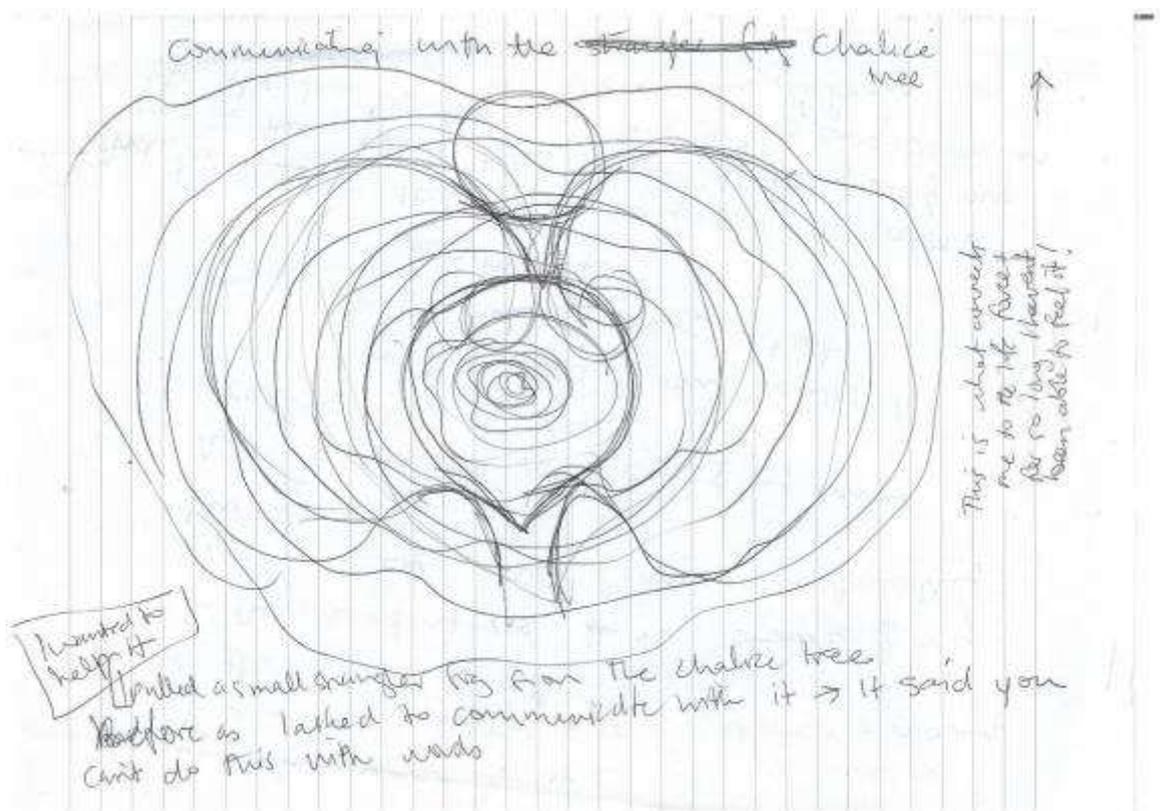
*In the heart of me is a well of cool still water
Red water – moving in the cycles of life
In the heart of me, in the chalice of my hips*

²¹⁸ I join the two as a means to describe an 'inner' sensation that is not a literal seeing or feeling but a noncorporeal activity that is analogous to the senses.

are fire blue flames continually burning
and a yellow voice calling my name, calling love out to me

In the well of my pelvis I sit still and retrieve what I was born for
and this is what I know after sitting with the altar tree, the pelvis tree
for most of the years of my life, the door to this deep pool of life-giving water has been
closed, and all I knew was darkness

This tree is very significant for me the shape of its trunk, the shape of my hips and pelvis
and the meditation I had where I saw a cool still pool bounded by my hips is even more
significant – I write in relation to that pool: 'This is what connects me to the life force and for
so long I haven't been able to feel it!'



Communicating with the Chalice/Hip Tree, 15/11/08

16th November: On the third and last day I felt calmer (still inside), more at ease in my surroundings and content in the particular area of the beach that I had chosen the day before. On the first day I had wanted to rest and explore and these two opposing desires had left me feeling restless. I felt as though I had moved into another space, or way of being where, what had previously felt like foreign territory and undifferentiated, was now rich with possibilities. Walking towards the chalice/altar tree I found a piece of driftwood shaped like the head of a Cassowary and I placed it in the sand in front of tree. I meditated with the tree, wanting to

communicate but not sure what to look-feel for? This become strained so I lay in the sand pressing my body into it, feeling myself as a part of that place in a way that I hadn't before. I collected more shells and pieces of coral, one dish-shaped on a stand. For the rest of the day I lay in the sand, gathered stones and shells and made other small sculptures with them, meditated, swam, and walked.

Diary Notes:

How do I feel about the natural world around me?

*It's amazing how long it takes to feel free enough to **really** stretch, and to realise that I don't have to do something. That it's all there - Just now moving tension. Keep notes of this process*

The stages in this retreat suggest the practices for a proposed case study of an 'arts in Nature' retreat/workshop that I would run:

- 1. Get people to keep a diary, which they use to present from each night and at the end of the retreat.*
- 2. Meditative examination of the workings of their body, using somatic and yoga exercises. (I just noticed now going from meditation to action how I miss so much in action – all of the beauty I saw when I was sitting still, diminished – remember that phrase of Merleau-Ponty's talking about reflection of trees in the still surface of a swimming pool – he must have been reflecting/meditating?)
Remind people that there is nothing to get, be or do.
Remember you miss a lot in the 'action' it's going 'ahead' all of the time rather than being 'in'.*
- 3. Exercise in 'feeling safe' – feeling when to pull back. when to go ahead, this is accessing some combined mind, intuition, body space.*
- 4. Walking on the beach, what do you see that means something to you and why, just be led don't grasp at it. Remind people that while they are in other states of consciousness the 'rules' of the material world still apply.*
- 5. Stand with Nature and move as it does – if you are with a tree and the wind is blowing its upper branches move like those branches*
- 6. Follow impulse rather than the mind, gather stones, shells etc., off the beach and create a small sculpture – feel led in this, follow inner impulses and let go of trying to work it out.*
- 7. Have daily meditation and yoga practice and daily sessions out in Nature. Have evening debriefs and a final presentation on the last day of the retreat. Document this with video and give each participant a copy of their videoed presentation. Introduce the Halprin Method of 'witnessing.'²¹⁹*
- 8. Depending on the length of the retreat have at last two days where there are no set activities and participant²²⁰s deepen into the practice in their own ways.*

²¹⁹ 'Witnessing', from the *Halprin Method* requires members of the 'arts in nature' group to watch without interrupting as one of their group performs. At the end of the performance they give feedback using 'I' statements: 'I felt', 'I saw', 'I heard', etc. This feedback is thought to add a significant layer to the experience for both performer and audience member.

²²⁰ I use the term 'participants' rather than 'co-researchers' in these appendices to indicate retreat participants.

9. *Once participants are familiar with the methods introduce the idea of a presentation relating to the relationship that they have built with a site on the beach or in the bush – which they will do 'live' for the rest of the group*



APPENDIX 6: STAGE ONE FIELDWORK, FIRST RETREAT

Stillness in Action: Meditation and Action for the World

Retreat/workshop, Wild Mountains Trust²²¹, Rathdowney, South East Queensland, Australia, 18th – 25th January 2009.

“Stillness in Action develops wisdom, calmness, courage and clarity to sustain a life of freedom and integrity in challenging times”. (*Stillness in Action* poster advertising retreat, 2009)

There were fourteen participants on the *Stillness in Action* retreat, two men and twelve women, ranging in age from 38 – 70, three facilitators, a cook, and the two owners of the *Wild Mountains Trust* who helped on the retreat. On the 18th of January, 2009 after the participants had settled into the camping style accommodation (part tent, part hut, no electricity or water), the retreat started with the facilitators introducing themselves. They were Bobbi Allan, a Buddhist meditation teacher and work-place facilitator, Simon Clough a professional mediator, and Joan McVilly a gestalt therapist. The guiding principles of the retreat were then introduced:

1. To maintain mindfulness – where possible each retreatant should apply themselves directly to what is going on around them, to be ‘present’ with what they are doing.
2. To develop community - We are in challenging times, where interrelationship is very important. Community will arise naturally as a part of this process, and learning here will help you bring it into your daily life.

Participants were given an outline of the retreat including its three primary elements: the Joanna Macy²²² ‘despair to empowerment’ work, community building and Buddhist teaching and meditation techniques. The topics for the ‘despair and empowerment’ work, which were spoken of as ‘a journey’, were also outlined at this stage:

18/01/09 - Building Community

19/01/09 – Generosity, affirming being alive

20/01/09 – Bearing Witness to the pain and suffering in the world

²²¹ The *Wild Mountains Trust* is a non-profit, community focused environmental education center, set in subtropical and eucalypt forests adjoining the *World Heritage Border Ranges National Park*, South of Rathdowney, South East Queensland. The Trust’s mission statement reads: “Wild Mountains exists to provide relevant and inspiring environmental education to the Australian community and to protect and conserve the natural environment over which Wild Mountains has stewardship” (Retrieved from the world wide web, 07/08/09).

²²² See: www.joannamacy.net

21/01/09 – Letting go of ego-labels, becoming more detached and aware

22/01/09 – Joy in being alive in this world of inter-dependence

22/01/09 – Looking at old ideas about the world to understand more recent thinking:

integrated, dynamic, systemic ways of thinking and what this means in terms of daily life.

23/01/09 – How to go back out into the world and maintain the work in one's daily life.

Participants introduced themselves by saying where they grew up, where they currently lived, and something that had happened recently, which made them glad to be alive. Each day began with an early morning walk or yoga session starting at 6.20am, following this and still in silence from the previous evening, the group led by Bobby Allen meditated together and listened to her *dharma* talk.²²³ After lunch the silence was broken and the Joanna Macy group work began in the afternoons.

The non-sitting meditative practices that participants engaged in each morning after the *dharma* talk²²⁴ and before lunch were:

Walking Meditation: A slow meditative walk, frequently done outside between two points in a straight and fairly short line.

Reconnecting with Nature or Useless Gazing: A practice that lasted for approximately twenty-five minutes. The practitioner was to feel 'led' to a site in Nature, once they found it and asked the place permission to enter, they then spent some time engaging their senses in communion with the place they had chosen.

Big Sky Feeling: The instruction for this practice was to find a place in nature with an extensive view, to look straight ahead and allow the gaze to soften. After some time they were then to imagine that conscious awareness was infusing and filling the whole area that you could see.

Life is Breathing Us – Breathing Through Us: As with the other two exercises, the instruction was to become aware of the senses and the environment, and then one's breath. At a certain point the practitioner might feel what Kabir called 'the breath within the breath', or the 'breath of the spirit'.

Reflections on the Dancing Earth: The retreat instructions stated: "Find a place in nature that attracts you, and where you can get a sense of the landscape. Begin to notice movement...notice the changing patterns in that movement...now widen your awareness to

²²³ A public discourse on Buddhism

²²⁴ The full transcripts of these talks can be found at: http://stillnessinaction.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=section&id=9&Itemid=35

include the shape of the landscape around you...Bring your awareness back to the movement around you and then to the movement within you”.

Note: The participants could adapt these activities as they chose

Below is an outline of the retreat activities:

Day 1, Sunday 18th January

1.00pm	Lunch
2.00	Opening Session
3.00	Free time
6.30	Dinner
7.45	Evening Session
9.00	Completion and silence

Days 2-7 Monday 19th – Saturday 24th January

6.00am	Wake up
6.20	Movement Practice
7.00	Sitting meditation
7.30	Breakfast
8.15	Work/karma yoga
8.45	Free time
9.15	Dharma talk, sitting and walking meditation
12.45pm	Lunch
2.45	Deep Change Work
5.30	Listening Groups
6.40	Dinner
8.00	Evening session
9.00	Completion and silence

Day 8 Sunday 25th January

6.00am	Wake up
6.20	Movement Practice
7.00	Sitting meditation

7.45	Breakfast
8.15	Work/karma yoga
8.45	Personal Pack-up
9.15	Final session
1.00pm	Lunch, Cleanup and Departure 2.30pm

APPENDIX 7: STAGE ONE, SECOND RETREAT

Retreat, Whatipu Lodge, Department of Conservation Reserve, Pararaha Valley, Waitakere Ranges, North Island of New Zealand, 23rd-27th March, 2009. Follow-up interviews, 28th – 31st March, 2009, Auckland, New Zealand.

“A residential movement-based workshop with photography and video in the wild natural environment of Whatipu Beach on Auckland’s West Coast...The workshop will include awareness work to bring us into our body and prime us for our time in nature. There will be time to explore, to express and re-create ourselves in the natural environment. Painting, drawing, photography and video will be extra resources in documenting our experience”. (Retreat poster, February, 2009)

Monday 23rd March, retreat starts

Notes, field diary:

As I drive through Huia and cross a small stream, I start winding up the hill and then look out to bush covered hills where there are no more houses. As I get to the end of a ridge pointing down to the ocean, I get that familiar feeling and think, ‘I’m going in’.

The retreat started in the early evening with the participants sharing dinner together. There were thirteen, all women ranging in age from 29 – 60, two facilitators, and a cook. The facilitators were Amanda Levey, who trained with Anna Halprin in the 1980s, and Soto Hoffman, a teacher at the *Tamalpa Institute*,²²⁵ postmodern dancer and somatic therapist. While the retreat was fairly unstructured it was framed by the Halprin *scoring technique*.²²⁶ After the facilitators introduced themselves, the participants followed, in ‘popcorn’ style (that is as people feel like it rather than following the person sitting next to them), speaking about why they had come to the retreat. Many mentioned that their main reason for coming was that they liked to move/dance in Nature, but felt too embarrassed to do it alone.

²²⁵ The *Tamalpa Institute*, in Mill Valley, California, USA, was founded in 1978 by Anna Halprin, whose work was further developed by her daughter the Psychologist, Daria Halprin. Tamalpa offers a wide range of training programs based on Halprin’s Life/Art Process (See: <http://www.tamalpa.org/about/index.html>).

²²⁶ Halprin’s ‘scoring technique’ developed out of collaborations with her husband the landscape architect Lawrence Halprin and his RSVP (Resources, Score, Valueaction, Performance) cycles. A method he developed to work in a non-hierarchical way in his community-based landscape architecture practice. Anna Halprin integrated these ideas into her community-based dance practice, and while they can become quite complex, in essence a score consists of a group of people using the RSVP cycle to collaborate on a movement project.

Tuesday 24th March, ‘Going Inwards’

The morning began with a warm-up led by Soto focused on the hip and pelvic area. In this practice slow mindful breathing was used to draw the participants’ attention to these areas. According to Soto ‘the breath is the best way to connect body and mind.’ At the end of the warm up, the theme for the day was introduced, which was ‘Contact, Explore, Respond’. Participants were divided into couples and told to explore the theme with their partner for the rest of the day. This finished in the late afternoon with the participants creating drawings about their experience. After dinner they sat in two lines facing each other with their drawings in front of them, and one-by-one spoke about, or ‘performed’, their earlier experiences using their drawings.

Wednesday, 25th March, ‘Expansion’

There were two parts to the morning exercise, starting with Amanda’s introduction to *Movement Ritual*, followed by Soto teaching a series of *Qigong*²²⁷ exercises. Soto spoke of these ‘mind-body’²²⁸ exercises, as an effective way to connect the participants to Nature and to the group. He also left the group with a question for the rest of the retreat: ‘How do I apply this work/experience in my daily life?’

The group then walked in silence and in single file away from the beach to a field by a small stream at the edge of the bush, where they started the next exercise with a ‘sharing circle’.²²⁹ After sharing the ‘scoring’ process was outlined. It was to start with the gathering of ‘Resources’ in the part of the bush that each group decided to work in. This was followed by the development of a ‘score’ by each group, which began with ‘Valuaction’, or deciding how ‘open’, flexible or ‘closed’ the score would be, and lastly the performance of the score in the chosen area. Soto suggested using ‘beginners mind’,²³⁰ or an open flexible mind without preconceptions - saying that it was about ‘being’ (in the environment), not ‘doing’. He said:

²²⁷ *Qigong* is an ancient Chinese meditation practice, which uses slow movement synchronised with the breath, is said to stimulate the flow of *Qi* in the body. *Qi*, often translated as ‘air’ or ‘breathe’, is thought to be a numinous life force running through the body. In Chinese medicine the blocking of *Qi* is said to cause physical illness.

²²⁸ The term ‘mind-body’, indicates the psychosomatic complex or interconnection of the mind and body, as suggested by the findings of psychoneuroimmunology - the science that studies the interaction between psychological processes and the nervous and immune systems.

²²⁹ The ‘sharing’ or ‘talking circle’ takes many forms, though frequently it consists of members of a group sitting in a circle to share insights or stories from the process that they have just participated in. The convention is that the person speaking is not interrupted, and that what is shared is not revealed to people outside of the circle.

²³⁰ ‘Beginners Mind’ (*Shoshin*) from Zen Buddhism is the open, unobstructed (by judgement) attitude to the processes, people or things that are being engaged.

“Don’t come with something that you will impose on the environment, find something there and work with it. Often, without you ‘figuring it out’, it will give you a metaphoric ‘answer’ that is very significant for your life” (Interview, 25th March, 2009). Four groups of three or four people then went into the bush, and spent an hour gathering resources, forty minutes scoring and ‘valueacting’, and forty minutes performing their score to their group.

After dinner there was a group score in a large cave about a twenty minute walk from the accommodation. Participants were told to bring a water bottle, candles, a musical instrument, and to wear closed shoes and layered clothing. Reaching the cave mouth in the dark, they were given the score, which was to enter one-by-one, and walk in a clock-wise direction around a group of candles in the middle of the cave, at four points in the circle, they were to stop and turn on the spot twice, and then sit down. Different musical instruments were passed around, drums and cymbals mainly, and without direction participants began to make sounds, both with the instruments and their voices using toning.²³¹ As the sound grew many of participants began dancing on the cold sand.

Thursday, 26th March, ‘Gentle Unraveling’

The morning started with an ‘awareness exercise’ in which the participants lay on the ground with their eyes closed, feeling themselves against the ground to get an impression of the alignment of their body. Amanda suggested that feeling the ‘alignment’ in the body can lead to alignment occurring in other parts of one’s life. The activities of the day were then introduced: the participants, using the scoring technique, were to find a ‘space’ to work in and create a score being directed by that place.

Once this was done each group performed their score to the larger group, at the end of each ‘performance’ the ‘witnesses’ or audience gave feedback using ‘I’ statements. The first group of four women performed in a large field of reeds in a marsh area some distance from the beach, the second a group of three women performed at the waters edge in front of a large rock, the third a slightly larger group of five women performed in the sand dunes.

Some of the feedback for the first performance, the *Reed Dance* was:

“I felt like time slowed down.”

“I felt really connected with all of the movement and with each other.”

²³¹ There are many forms of ‘toning’, with the more conventional technique being unstructured singing (following ones impulse not a musical score) of the ‘unmusical’ microtones between the twelve musical notes.

“There was a sense of sound or melody, it was like there was music playing.”

“It felt perceptually as though the sound had been turned up.”

“When I saw you rotating I felt this meditative calm, like you were contained in this bowl.”

“It felt like you were communicating, like you were so much a part of it, so blended.”

“I imagined that there were creatures coming up and down.”

“We just became the reeds and dissolved.”

As participants returned from the beach they could choose to rest or to draw in response to the days work. After dinner a large screen was erected outside, music was played, video of natural images and people moving was projected onto it, and a number of the participants danced with the images and each other.

Friday the 27th of March, Retreat Ends

The morning began with undirected movement, stretching, and mindfulness exercises. The group then gathered in one of the rooms of the fishing lodge for the final sharing circle. While this would be the usual way to end such a retreat, it also gave me the opportunity to conduct a group interview, as many of the participants who were leaving directly after the retreat, lived in cities outside of Auckland where I was based at the time. At the end of the talking circle the participants shared lunch and left before 3pm



Beyond the Doors!

A residential movement-based workshop with photography and video in the wild natural environment of Whatipu Beach on Auckland's West Coast

A residential movement-based workshop with photography and video in the wild natural environment of Whatipu Beach on Auckland's West Coast hosted by Amanda Levey joined by international guests: G Hoffman Sob, master teacher from Tamalpa Institute USA, and others to be confirmed. Dancing and moving in Nature offers the possibility to experience oneself in unique and dynamic ways. It allows us to feel ourselves as part of nature, and not something separate.

The workshop will include awareness work to bring us into our body and prime us for our time in nature. There will be time to explore, to express and re-create ourselves in the natural environment. Painting, drawing, photography and video will be extra resources in documenting our experience. This beautiful untamed beach environment offers black sand, bush, lagoons, wild ocean, sand dunes, and coves, that will provide stimulation, release from everyday reality, natural metaphors and settings for a unique experience of self-exploration and exciting individual and group improvisations.

Dates From the afternoon/evening of Monday 23 March to midday Friday 27 March 2009. **Accommodation** Whatipu Lodge, food included.

Cost \$NZ850 earlybird \$800 if paid in full before 20 February. **Contact** Amanda Levey T +649 623 6596 E amanda@marco.org.nz **www.marco.org.nz**

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MOVEMENT ART EXHIBITION PERFORMANCE

Email Introducing the Retreat

----- Original Message -----

From: Amanda Levey <amanda@marco.org.nz>

To: Patricia Morgan <pfhmorgan@yahoo.com>

Sent: Tuesday, 17 February, 2009 7:37:47 AM

Subject: Re: a thought?

Hi All,

We are very excited about the *Beyond the Doors Workshop* at Whatipu, we went out there to finalize all the details and there are a few other things I have thought of that you should know and bring. If you haven't told me by email your in/out times please do, as those of you who have told me verbally, my brain has not retained it!

Things to know:

1. There is probably no mobile phone coverage down at the lodge and the beach but you can probably go up the road or uphill to get it. So if people need to get in touch with you in an emergency, you should give them the landline of the Lodge which is **811 8860**.
2. Swimming can be dangerous on those beaches, so never swim alone. There are unpredictable rips and currents in the surf and this beach is not patrolled. The first part of the beach you get to is relatively safe as it is protected by two rocky outcrops but caution is still advised. There is a good swimming hole in the stream near the bridge on the way to the beach.

Extra things to bring:

1. The black sand gets very hot so never go to the beach in bare feet. The beach includes a lagoon and stream so bring footwear such as **sport sandals** that can get wet or that you can easily take off and put on. Also bring **good walking shoes**.
2. It is good to have a **lava lava/sarong** for the day and shawl/pashmina at night. We will bring some spares for those who don't have them.
3. If you have a **headlight torch** that would be the best.
4. If you have a **yoga mat** or blanket for warm ups, and cushion bring those, again we will bring spares.
5. If you have a **camera** or **video camera** bring it along. We have some extras to use if you don't have your own.
6. Please bring some **candles**
7. A **drum** if you have one
8. There is a tennis court so you may want to bring a **tennis racquet!**

The List of what to bring:

Bedding such as a sleeping bag or duvet and linen (there is linen for hire there if you need)

Towels (at least 1 for showers, 1 for beach)

Sunscreen

Insect repellent

Torch

Notebook or journal if you keep one

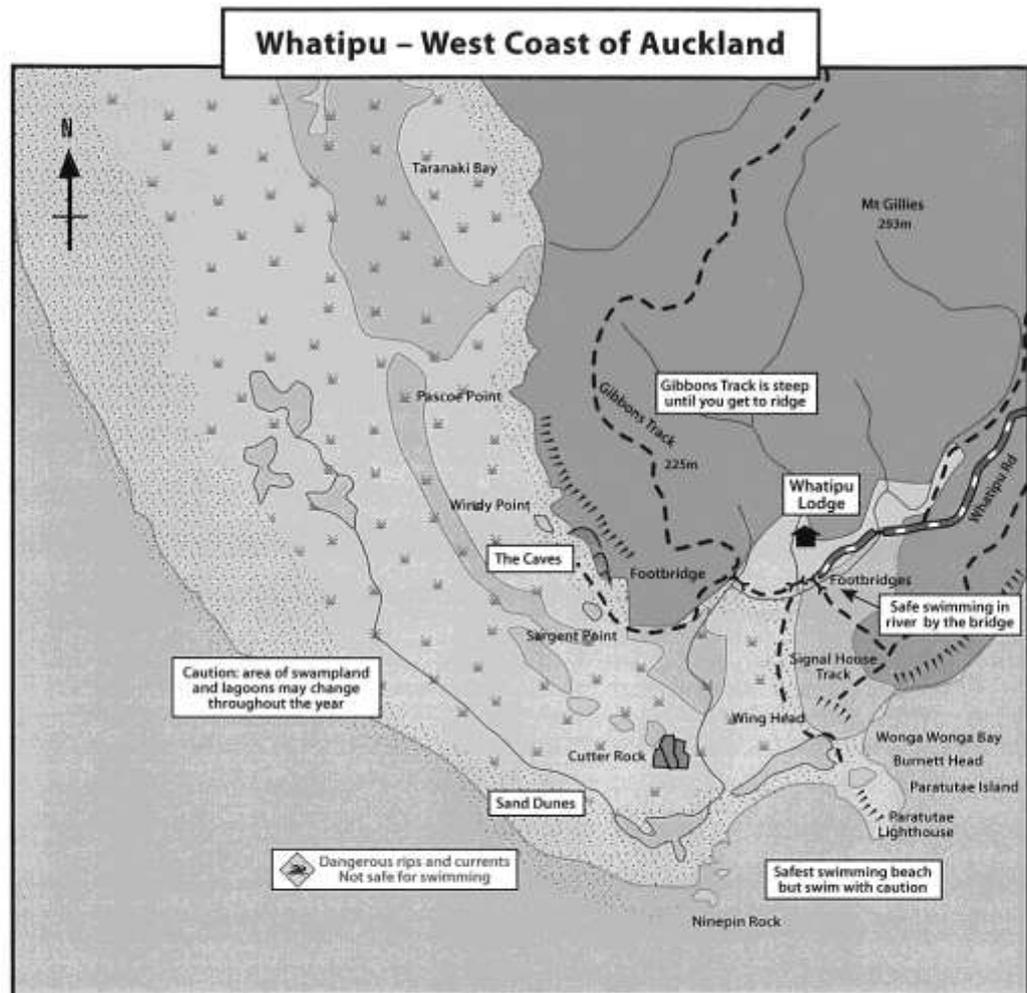
Any special art materials (we will provide basic art materials)

Clothes, the weather can be very varied at that time of year, so bring layers, you will need:

Swim suit, Sleeveless tops, T-shirts, ¾ sleeves, Long sleeves, Jumper (preferably wool)

Jacket, Rain/wind jacket, Shorts, ¾ pants, Warm track pants, Sports sandals, Good walking shoes

(If you have any light wool, like Ice Breaker, that can be good for NZ evenings)
Hat(s) sun for day and warm for evening (we can provide extras if you can't pack them)
And of course any other favorite items that you may like to wear when moving. If you have plain colors that will work well in nature that would be great, such as black, grey, blue, brown, red, white etc. We will be doing photography and video so it works well to have clothes that either blend or contrast with the environment.



APPENDIX 8: STAGE ONE, THIRD RETREAT

Kriya Anusthan: Bush Yoga Retreat, Yoga in Daily Life (YIDL), 640 acre Retreat Center, Dungog, Hunter Valley, NSW, Australia, 7th – 10th April

“We invite you to join us for a 4 day retreat in the heart of the Hunter Valley. Camp at YIDL’s 640 acre retreat property at Dungog. Inspiring lectures by Swamiji, Yoga programs and bush walks, Delicious vegetarian meals, BYO tent, sleeping kit, and torch”. (Retreat poster, March, 2009)

Tuesday the 7th of April

Seventy-one people, a third men, two thirds women, attended the *Bush Yoga Retreat*, based at the Yoga in Daily Life (YIDL) retreat center, just outside of Dungog, in the Hunter Valley region of New South Wales (NSW), Australia. There were two kinds of programs for the three-day *Kriya Anusthana*²³² retreat, one for advanced practitioners, and one for those who were less experienced. The retreat was conducted in *mauna* (silence) where possible. It began after dinner and was introduced by Vishwaguru Mahamandaleshwar Paramhans Swami Maheshwarananda (Swamiji), his welcome was webcast to 40 countries around the world (See: <http://www.swamiji.tv/>). Swamiji welcomed everyone and spoke of the ‘untouched’ quality of the bush at the retreat center, saying that this quality made it very conducive to meditation. In his introduction he said:

To come to this Divine Forest, to untouched Nature and to be one with Nature, to inhale this kind of air, is very special. After the programs, stretch yourself and look to the forest, be aware of the trees and see how they stand peacefully together. Through these practices and keeping *mauna* you will come to know your inner strength it will awaken, when you don’t speak you will ‘dream the dream’, the action of the *mauna* will let this energy out. Practice your mantra, those who don’t have mantra practice AUM²³³ or simply follow your breath, be aware of the ascending and descending breath process. (Swamiji, Dungog, 7th April, 2009)

²³² *Kriya Anusthana*, *Kriya* as action, and *Anusthana* the constant remembrance of God describes a sequence of yogic meditation exercises aimed at developing the adherent’s ability to focus on the divine. (See Satyananda Yoga Glossary at <http://www.satyananda.net/Etcetera/glossary.php>)

²³³ AUM or OM  is both a symbol and a sound, both represent *Brahman*, the divine animating force in all material and nonmaterial existence.

Kriya Anusthana Program

6.35am	Prayer
7.00	Two-hour meditation practice before breakfast
9.00	Light breakfast (the advice was to eat less than normal as this assist one's ability to focus)
10am – 12pm	Meditation Practice
12 – 1	Light lunch
1-5	Meditation Practice
5-6	Lecture
6-7	Light dinner
7-9	Prayer, <i>Satsang</i> including <i>Bhajans</i> ²³⁴

Wednesday 8th – 9th April

Both days had the same format: The morning session began at 6.35am; it ran for two hours and was divided into three sections. Each of these sections employed different *prāṇāyāma*²³⁵ techniques, some of which used focus on the *cakra*'s²³⁶ and the pineal gland²³⁷ to maintain and develop concentration.

The afternoon session started at 1pm and was also divided into three parts. The main difference between this and the sessions in the morning, was that the focusing exercises were done using a

²³⁴ *Bhajans* are spiritual or devotional songs, many of the *bhajans* sung by YIDL students were written by masters from Swami Maheshwarananda's spiritual lineage. They praise the *Guru* or deities, answer fundamental questions, and tell stories related to spiritual lessons.

²³⁵ *Pranayama* from *prana* vital force and *yama* control, or 'breath control', is a yoga exercise in which variations on breathing in, out, and retention of the breath, are used to still the mind; it is often used as a preparation for meditation.

²³⁶ Some Hindu and Buddhist Schools posit the existence of *Chakras*, which are said to be energy centers in the body. There are thought to be eight major *cakras*, which exist in a subtle energetic layer surrounding the physical body. They are the *mūlādhāra cakra* or root *cakra* in the perineum area, *svādhiṣṭhāna cakra* in the sexual organs region, *maṇipūra cakra* navel centre, *anāhata cakra* heart centre, *viśuddhi cakra* laryngeal centre, *ājñā cakra* located between the eyebrows, *bindu cakra* approximately five centimeters from the crown of the head towards the base of the neck, and the *sahasrara cakra* the crown *cakra*, also called *brahmarandhra*. These spinning 'wheels' of energy are linked to the material body and are said to receive and transmit energy from and to it.

²³⁷ In both Hinduism and Buddhism the pineal gland is associated with the third eye or *ājñā* the sixth, *cakra*. Contemplative branches of both religions use various 'third eye training', which involves a number of methods that focus the attention on the space between the eyebrows. In his text on esoteric physiology, Walker outlines the site of the pineal gland, which is a "small endocrine body the size of a pea and shaped like a miniature pine-cone...It is situated near the middle of the skull not far from the pituitary gland and is connected with the third ventricle, which supposedly governs reason and judgement" (Walker, 1974, p. 44).

*mala*²³⁸. This session finished at 5pm in time for a one-hour lecture, dinner at 6pm and then prayer and *Satsanga* with Swamiji, which was webcast and lasted two hours.

Field Notes:

Do I feel differently about Nature at the end of these few days?

There have been moments like seeing a heat haze, that wasn't heat above the grass, was it energy? Or being so struck by the sound of the trees in the wind. Beautiful clouds streaking the blue sky. The GREENNESS. The beauty of a very short sunset as it changed the colour of the clouds to a deep pink, for just a moment. The breeze as it came into the tent. The heat of the sun on my back. My senses are heightened and at the end of the 108 mantra practice in the afternoons I felt strong and energetic, clear somehow, happy and peaceful for just a few moments.

Friday the 10th of April

The last day of the retreat had the same format until 12 o'clock when the two groups broke for lunch, after which Swamiji spoke briefly with the participants, who then left for various parts of Australia and New Zealand.

²³⁸ A *Mala* is a set of 108 beads (commonly 108, though other numbers divisible by nine are used), which are used to keep count while reciting mantras, this practice is known as *Japa*.

Retreat Poster

BUSH YOGA RETREAT

with *Swamiji*



YOGA IN DAILY LIFE
योगीन्द्राचार्य नारायण
THE SYSTEM
Serenity for body, mind and soul



Dungog

APRIL 7-10, 2009

We invite you to join us for a 4 day retreat into the heart of the Hunter Valley.



Camp at YIDL's 640 acre retreat property at Dungog.

*Inspiring lectures by Swamiji,
Yoga programs & bush walks,
Delicious vegetarian meals,
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*For more information & prices:
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Call: (02) 9518 7788
Email: sydney.events@yogaindailylife.org.au*

Retreat Registration Form



Harmony for Body, Mind and Soul

SWAMIJI AUSTRALIAN TOUR 2009
Spiritual Awakening for World Peace
REGISTRATION FORM Sydney April 1 - 10
www.swamiji.org.au

2 PAGES

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Email: pfhmorgan@yahoo.com Please tick to email me for upcoming events
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SPIRITUAL LECTURES 'Finding Peace Within'

	Number tickets	Concession tickets	Total \$																		
7pm Wednesday April 1 Cost: \$25 Venue: Masonic Centre Sydney CBD , 279 Castlereagh Street	1	N/A	25																		
7pm Friday April 3 Cost: \$25, includes refreshments Venue: tba	1	N/A	25																		
7pm Saturday April 4 Cost: \$25, includes refreshments Venue: Kensington Yoga in Centre , 117-119 Anzac Parade, corner Todman Avenue	1	N/A	25																		
7pm Sunday April 5 Cost: \$25, includes refreshments Venue: Kensington Yoga in Centre , 117-119 Anzac Parade, corner Todman Avenue	1	N/A	25																		
7pm Monday April 6 Cost: \$25 Venue: Masonic Centre Sydney CBD , 279 Castlereagh Street	1	N/A	25																		
Saturday April 4 & Sunday April 5 Weekend Yoga & Meditation Workshops Venue: Yoga in Daily Life 117-119 Anzac Parade Kensington NSW 2033 Phone: 02 9518 7788 email: sydney.events@yogaindailylife.org.au 9am registration for 9.30am start. Finish at 3.30pm One day only \$65 or \$55 concession. Includes lunch – please indicate which day Discount for both days \$120 or \$100 concession.	<table border="1"> <tr> <td colspan="3">Saturday</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">Sunday</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">Both Days</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>			Saturday						Sunday						Both Days					
Saturday																					
Sunday																					
Both Days																					
Tuesday – Friday April 7 to 10 Bush Retreat – Dungog, Hunter Valley Camping in Dungog, Hunter Valley Retreat registration from Tuesday 1pm Retreat ends Friday mid morning \$70 or \$55 concession per night \$210 or \$165 concession for full retreat BYO tent, sleeping kit and torch Venue: see website for directions Phone: 02 9518 7788 email: sydney.events@yogaindailylife.org.au	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Tues</td> <td>✓</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Wed</td> <td>✓</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Thurs</td> <td>✓</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>All</td> <td>✓</td> <td></td> <td>165</td> </tr> </table>	Tues	✓			Wed	✓			Thurs	✓			All	✓		165				
Tues	✓																				
Wed	✓																				
Thurs	✓																				
All	✓		165																		
<i>Optional – please accept my donation towards Swamiji's World Peace Tour</i> <i>Yoga in Daily Life is a not-for-profit community organisation, staffed by volunteers</i> <i>committed to bringing the benefits of Yoga, Meditation & Health to you.</i>			30																		
TOTAL			\$ 345																		

(1)

"There is only one religion to which we all belong and that is humanity" – Swamiji

APPENDIX 9: STAGE ONE, FOURTH RETREAT

***Yoga Ecology*, Satyananda Yoga Mangrove Mountain Retreat Center, 300 Mangrove Creek Road, NSW, Australia. 21st – 26th April**

“Sustaining the self through yoga and sustaining the planet are intimately linked. *Yoga Ecology* explores the connection between our inner nature and external environment. Lectures on the philosophy of *Yoga Ecology* and modern methods for sustainable living are combined with the practices of yoga, yajña²³⁹, gardening, and tree pūja²⁴⁰. An invaluable experience for anyone interested in sustainable living”.

(Retreat overview, retrieved from the worldwide web, 10/08/2009, <http://www.satyananda.net/Retreats/Retreats%20by%20topic/index.php?topic=Sadhana%20and%20Self%20Knowledge#144:1>)

Tuesday the 21st of April

There were fourteen participants on this retreat, eight women and six men ranging in age from 34 – 67, three facilitators, various guest lecturers, yoga teachers, and a team of *karma*²⁴¹ yogis who did the cooking. Participants arrived throughout the day on the 21st of April, and after dinner at 6.30pm; they attended the introduction given by Swami Ahimsadhara²⁴² (Helen Cushing²⁴³), the facilitator who designed the retreat and Swami Atmamuktananda the co-facilitator. Swami Ahimsadhara began by suggesting that there were strong links between yoga and environmentalism, saying that ‘Yoga grew out of a deep connection with Nature’. She gave the example of the *āsanas*²⁴⁴ or physical poses created by the early yoga practitioners after observing Nature. Swami Ahimsadhara noted that from the inception of yoga, natural settings close to pure air and water, have been recommended as the ideal place to practice yoga. She suggested that the best way for a practitioner to deepen their yoga practice is to relearn their connection with Nature.

²³⁹ Broadly speaking *Yajna* means worship or devotion to God, it can indicate many different ways of worshipping the Divine including *Havan* the fire ceremony.

²⁴⁰ *Pūja* loosely translates as adoration; *Pūjas* can take many forms, though all are ceremonies in which offerings are made to the Divine, these may include flowers, incense, water, grains, and sanctified liquids including *ghee* or clarified butter. The *Tree pūja* taught on the retreat, consisted of choosing a tree and then offering it, light, incense, a flower, and water, each day.

²⁴¹ *Karma* translates as actions or deeds, *Karma Yoga* is the ‘Yoga of Action’, students or devotees perform selfless service for their teacher or *Guru*.

²⁴² Swami Ahimsadhara, like a number of the facilitators on the retreat was a ‘lay’ *swami*. These *swamis* have taken some of the vows of a *sannyāsi/sannyāsini*, or renunciant but they also maintain a secular life.

²⁴³ Some of the fundamental concepts supporting the retreat, particularly the idea of ‘gardening as an act of stewardship’, can be found in Cushing’s *Beyond Organics*. See: http://www.holisticpage.com.au/BeyondOrganics_HelenCushing9780733315756

²⁴⁴ *Āsana*, roughly translates as sitting down, *āsanas* or yoga movements/postures, are the third of Patañjali’s ‘Eight Limbs of Yoga’ from his seminal *Yoga Sūtras*.

Swami Ahimsadhara provided an overview of the practices that would be used on the retreat to remind participants of the fundamental links between themselves, Nature and Yoga. For example, each day would have a theme, which was one of the five *tattvas*²⁴⁵ or elements, with *pṛthivī*, or Earth, being the focus for the first day. There were twice daily *Havans*, which Swami Ahimsadhara outlined as excellent practices - to realize the connections between the ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ ecology. Recitation of the *Gāyatrī mantra*²⁴⁶, Tree *pūja*²⁴⁷ and gardening, were also daily practices. The program, outlining these activities is at the end of the document. The first day of the retreat closed with a meditation practice, after which the retreat participants adopted *mauna* (silence) until lunch the next day.

Wednesday the 22nd April

The day started at 5.30am with a forty-five minute *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma* and meditation practice in which there was a focus on the *mūlādhāra* or root cakra (the *cakra* said to be most aligned with material or earthly existence). The focus of the morning meditation was a yellow square or the *yantra*²⁴⁸ representing *pṛthivī* the Earth *tattva*. The *Havan*²⁴⁹ ritual followed this and after breakfast and a chanting session there was a lecture by Swami Anandakumar on ‘*Pañcabhūta*

²⁴⁵ *Tattva* translates as principal or primary element. In *Śaivite* (Śaivites worship the God *Śiva*) Philosophy, which broadly underpins the Satyananda approach, there are 36 *tattvas*, consisting of the Five *Mahābhūtas*, the five material elements; the five *tanmātras*, mediums of the senses; the five *karmendriyas*, organs of action; the five *jñānendriyas*, the sense organs; *antaḥkaraṇa*, five ‘inner instruments’ or aspects of mind; *Sat kañcukas*, six ‘limitations’ to the sense of space; *śuddha tattvas*, five aspects of the divine consciousness. In this retreat mention of the *tattvas* relates to the Five *Mahābhūtas* that are said to make up the material world: *pṛthivī*, Earth; *jala*, Water; *tejas*, Fire; *vāyu*, Air; *ākāśa*, Ether. In Tantric symbolic representation, Air is a blue circle, Earth a yellow square, Fire a red triangle, Water a pale blue crescent, and Ether a black oval

²⁴⁶ The *Gāyatrī Mantra* is “*Om bhūr bhuvah svah, tat savitur varenyam, bhargo devasya dhīmahi, dhiyo yo nah pracodayāt*”, the Rig Veda (10:16:3). There are many translations of the *Gayatri Mantra*, though on the Satyananda Website it is translated as: “We meditate on that which is eternal, that light of wisdom and truth, which permeates all realms of experience, the creative principal manifesting through the radiance of consciousness. The light which bestows wisdom, bliss, eternal life is the quintessence of everything and leads us to illumination” (Retrieved from the world wide web, 24/08/09, http://www.satyananda.net/Etcetera/common_mantras.php:1).

²⁴⁷ It was suggested by the retreat facilitators that the Tree *pūja* be understood as a form of communication and in this way its practice would help realign the practitioners with Nature.

²⁴⁸ *Yantras*, from the root *yam*, meaning to control, with the suffix *tra* meaning instrument, they are meditation symbols used to support focus. The yellow cube or square, for example, represents the earth forces and is also the *yantra* representing the *mūlādhāra* or root chakra. *Yantras* can be one geometric shape such as the cube, they can be made up of a series of geometric symbols such as the famous *Sri Yantra*, which represents the Goddess Lakshmi and/or the ‘web of the cosmos’, or they can be more representational, such as the lotus flower that symbolizes the *chakras*.

²⁴⁹ All members of the Satyananda community and the participants on the *Yoga Ecology* retreat attended the *Havans* at dawn and dusk (these times of day are considered to be auspicious). In brief, the *Havan Kund* (in Sanskrit this would be *havana kunda* – but often these groups use the Hindi, *havan kund*) or fireplace was decorated with flowers and colored rice prior to the ritual, twigs were placed in a specific pattern within the *Havan Kund* and set alight using pure camphor, incense was then lit at each corner of the fire, and water sprinkled around the fireplace. As *mantra* recitation began, ghee, flowers, rice and *samagree* (ground herbs used specifically for *Havan*) were offered to the fire. The *havan* lasted for approximately half an hour, though as the smoke from the *Havan* is considered cleansing some participants choose to stay in the ritual space for some time after the *Havan*.

and Ecology'. *Pañcabhūta* or the five elements, earth, air, fire, water and ether, are elemental forms similar to Plato's solids. Chanting of the *Shiva Mānasa Pūjā*²⁵⁰ by Sri Adi Shankaracharya followed breakfast, and then an hour of *Kama Yoga*, working in different areas around the retreat center.

The second session of the morning was led by Swami Siddhanta who began by introducing the ways in which certain methods of food production are implicated in environmental degradation. This then led to a more in-depth discussion on soil quality and the way that soil quality is directly linked to global warming, because of its ability to store carbon dioxide. This lecture formed the theory section of the *Create Your Own Garden Sessions*, which ran in the morning after morning tea followed by an experiential gardening session after lunch. In the afternoon session participant's learnt how to do texture and PH testing of soil. The practice of *Yoga Nidrā*²⁵¹ followed the mornings theory session and *Karma Yoga* ran for an hour after lunch. From 3.30 – 4.30pm the participants attended a lecture on traditional medicine and bush foods from the area, which was presented in song and story by Gabby Duncan an Aboriginal elder of the Darkinjung people. There was a half hour meditation after this lecture and the evening *Havan*, which followed the same format as the morning *Havan*, except for the use of different *mantras*.

Thursday 23rd April

The theme for the day was *āpas* or *jala*, which is Water, the *yantra* for *āpas* is a pale blue crescent and this was the focus for the morning meditation. In the first theory session of the day Swami Shraddhamurti spoke on *Ecological Themes in the Vedas*. He emphasized that in the Vedas it is stated that the life of each species is meant for the well-being of all other species. All of the 8,400,000 species on the planet live for each other, except for one - the human species, which 'lives for itself'. *Tree pūja* was the focus for the next lecture, which was expanded on in the afternoon's experiential encounter with *Tree pūja*. *Tree pūja* was conducted at sunset on the second day and for the following days of the retreat. Swami Atmamuktananda introduced the practice by reflecting on Swami Niranjanananda's description of it as a "way of connecting with Nature and then through Nature with the Divine" (Swami Niranjanananda, 2009 *Tree Puja, Yoga Ecology Meditation*, unpublished retreat leaflet: 3).

²⁵⁰ The *Shiva Mānasa Pūjā* is a *stotra* (a hymn of praise) written by the renunciant Vedic Philosopher (788CE – 820 CE) Sri Adi Shankaracharya, it is described as his 'mental worship of Lord Shiva.

²⁵¹ *Yoga Nidrā* is often translated as 'yogic sleep'; it has two primary aspects, firstly as method of relaxation and as a *sādhana* or spiritual practice in which the adherent becomes immersed in 'direct communion' with the Divine. The *Yoga Nidrā* practiced at the *Yoga Ecology Retreat* was a variation of the former. The participants lay on their back with their arms and feet slightly apart and with cushions and blankets where they needed them to make them comfortable. With their eyes closed the participants were then led through a guided visualisation, in which each body part was named in a particular sequence starting on the right side of the body.

The instruction for *Tree pūja* was to find a tree that the participant was attracted to and to ‘ask it with their heart’ if it wished to participate. Once the tree was identified then the adherent was to gather a small candle or *dīpa*, a glass of water, a stick of incense and a flower, sit in front of the tree, light the candle, then the incense, sprinkle the water around the tree and offer the flower. Then to spend some reflective time with the tree, possibly with closed eyes, and to pray for the tree. It was suggested to start with the *Mahāmṛtyuñjaya Mantra*²⁵² then personal prayers. The second day ended with a storytelling session run by Swami Shraddhamurti, who read from the *Purāṇas*.²⁵³

Friday 24th April

The theme for the day was *Agni*, Fire and its symbol the red triangle was used as the focus for the morning meditation. The first session of the day was a presentation on *Green Living* by a representative of the Wyong Shire Council (Wyong, NSW). This covered some of the environmental management areas that the council is working on, such as: lifestyles and waste, recycling, composting, organic and community gardening, sustainable land management, green cleaning, and local food initiatives. They are outlined in their, “Green Living for a Healthy Lifestyle”, which can be ordered at: <http://www.wyong.nsw.gov.au>. Activities outlined in the program continued through this day until the evening session when a documentary titled *Earth Pilgrim: A spiritual journey into the landscape of Dartmoor with Satish Kumar*²⁵⁴ was shown.

Saturday 25th April

Vāyu or Air was the theme of the fourth day and its symbol, the blue circle, was the focal point for the morning meditation. The two theory sessions of the morning were led by Swami Purnamuti, a Satyananda practitioner and scientist with the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO) in Sydney, Australia, who spoke about Renewable Energy Solutions. He provided an overview of the history of alternative energy sources and in particular solar power, then spoke about a research project in which he is working to develop effective and financially viable solar power. The day ended with an hour of *kirtan*, which is a form of ‘call and response’ singing or chanting of Hindu devotional songs and mantras. Unlike

²⁵² The *Mahāmṛtyuñjaya Mantra*, is a verse from the *Yajurveda* dedicated to Lord *Śiva*, the recitation of this mantra is thought to be health restoring. The mantra is as follows: “ (*Oṃ tryambakam yajāmahe sugandhim puṣṭi-vardhanam, urvārukam iva bandhanān mṛtyor mukṣīya mā ‘mṛtāt’*”, the translation is: “We bow to thee three-eyed Lord (*Śiva*) who is full of sweet fragrance, who nourishes human beings. May he free me from the bondage of births and deaths, just as the ripe cucumber is separated from the vine, and may I be fixed in immortality” (Devanananda, 1999, p. 63).

²⁵³ The *Purāṇas* (*purāṇa* is the Sanskrit word for ‘ancient times’) are a collection of *Vedic* religious texts which narrate genealogies of important mythical beings, Hindu cosmology, and philosophy.

²⁵⁴ More information about this DVD can be found at: <http://www.resurgence.org/shop/redv003-earth-pilgrim-dvd.html>

the singing of *bhajans*, *kirtan* uses shorter verses and more repetition; frequently both are accompanied by the harmonium, drums and hand symbols.

Sunday 26th April

Ether or *ākāśa* was the theme for the last day and its symbol, the black oval, was used in the morning's meditation. A thirty minute *Walking with Nature Meditation* followed, which involved the participants walking 'mindfully' or with increased awareness on a track near the retreat center. To increase their mindfulness and focus they were asked to keep *mauna* and instructed to pay attention to one of their senses at the time, moving through, smell, sight, sound and touch. This was followed by a closing ceremony in which each of the participants spoke about their impressions of the retreat and were then given *prasād*²⁵⁵ (in Sanskrit this would be *prasāda*). The retreat concluded with a shared lunch and retreat participants left at approximately 1.30pm.

²⁵⁵ *Prasāda*, or a 'gracious gift', can be a number of things though it is generally food and frequently sweets. For it to become *prasāda* it is first offered to a deity who is thought to partake of it, and by doing so, imbuing it with his/her essence. The facilitators of the *Yoga Ecology* retreat extended the meaning of *prasāda* somewhat, by giving participants copies of an organic gardening magazine, flower seeds, a Satyandanda Yoga magazine, and some *Havan* ash.

Yoga Ecology Retreat Poster



Yoga &
Ecology
Retreat



SATYANANDA YOGA®

Mangrove Retreat Centre, NSW

April 21st – 26th \$480



Bringing together ancient Vedic ecology, yoga practices, connection with nature, and practical solutions for living in harmony with all life.

Experience the tattwas within

Havan at dawn & dusk

Tree puja – a subtle communication

Ecology & stories from the Vedas

Indigenous spirituality

Organic gardening

Inspiring talks

Uplifting mantras and chanting

Meditations on the tattwas

Align with nature



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Yoga Ecology Retreat Program

Yoga and Ecology April 2009 Timetable

DAY	Wed 22 April	Thur 23 April	Fri 24 April	Sat 25 April	Sun 26 April
1 HR	5.30-6.30 am	EMC 1 - pithvi	EMC 2 - Apas	EMC 3 - Agni	EMC 4 - Vayu
1 HR	6.30-7.00	Havan	Havan	Havan	Havan
1 HR	7.45 - 8.00	Chanting	Chanting	Chanting	Chanting
1 HR	8.00 - 9.00	Cleaning Karma yoga - please meet at reception	Chanting	Chanting	Chanting
1 HR	9.30-10.30	Panchabhuta and Ecology	Ecological Themes in the Vedas	The Yoga of Gardening	Sri Sri Paramahansa Sustainable Living
1 HR	Lecture 1	Morning tea	Create Your Own Garden	Create Your Own Garden	Renewable Energy Solutions
1 HR	10.30-11	Yoga Nidra	Yoga Nidra	Yoga Nidra	Yoga Nidra
1 HR	11 - 11.50	Yoga Nidra	Yoga Nidra	Yoga Nidra	Yoga Nidra
1 HR	Lecture 2	Yoga Nidra	Yoga Nidra	Yoga Nidra	Yoga Nidra
1 HR	12:00 pm - 12.30	Lunch & cleanup	Lunch & cleanup	Lunch & cleanup	Lunch & cleanup
1 HR	12.30-1.30	Karma Yoga	Karma Yoga	Karma Yoga	Renewable Energy Solutions
1 HR	1.30 - 3.00	Afternoon tea	Afternoon tea	Afternoon tea	Afternoon tea
1 HR	3.00 - 5.30	3.30-4.30pm Traditional medicine / bush foods (Aboriginal Elder)	Tree Puja Theory & Practical	Organic Farming in India Tree Puja	Tree Puja & Discussion Ahimsa
1 HR	Lecture: 3.30-4.30	Meditation Havan	Meditation Havan	Meditation Havan	Meditation Havan
1 HR	Meditation: 4.30-5.00	Meditation Havan	Meditation Havan	Meditation Havan	Meditation Havan
1 HR	5.30 - 6.00	(60-90 min) Spirituality & connection to land/indigenous song & dance / Gabby (Aboriginal Elder)	Storytelling Shradhamurti	DVD Earth Pilgrim	Kirtan
1 HR	6.00 - 7.15	Dinner & cleanup	Dinner & cleanup	Dinner & cleanup	Dinner & cleanup
1 HR	7.15-8.15	Introduction To the course	Introduction To the course	Introduction To the course	Introduction To the course

SATYANANDA YOGA® Mangrove- YAMM Yoga Ecology April 2009
** Peter Omeron CITS - CREA - Sumer Parvathi*

Yoga Ecology Retreat Application Form

2009 Satsang with Swamiji and Yoga Ecology ELECTRONIC ENROLMENT FORM SATYANANANDA YOGA® MANGROVE (version 1.1)

Section 1 - PERSONAL DETAIL S: use a separate form for each adult

Family Name Morgan Given Name Patricia male female
 Spiritual name (if applicable) Puspa Date of Birth 10/01/1957
 Street 10 Carey Street Suburb / Town Randwick, NSW Postcode 2031
 Telephone home (02) 96641586 mobile phone 0448801929
 e-mail pfmorgan @ yahoo.com

Section 3 - ENROLMENT - YOGA RETREATS

Please enroll me in the following courses:

- Satsang with Swamiji DAY VISIT Satsang with Swamiji
 Satsang with Swamiji + Yoga Ecology Yoga Ecology only
 Seva week 1 Seva week 2

Arrival date / / at am/pm
 Departure date / / at am/pm
 Name of CHILD 1 male female date of birth / /
 Name of CHILD 2 male female date of birth / /
 Please specify any medical conditions or disabilities that we may need to be made aware of:

- Wheat free Gluten free Dairy free Vegan No onion/garlic Steamed veg / plain rice (\$10 /day surcharge)

If you have special requirements please consult reception prior to booking.

DISCOUNTS on courses and retreats

- 10% accredited teacher 30% affiliated SY teacher 20% aged pensioner
 20% ex long term resident (5+ yrs) 50% director of Satyananda Yoga entity
 Have you stayed at Rocklyn or Mangrove Retreat Centre previously? yes no

TRANSPORT

- I will arrive by own transport - **please provide your car number plate**
 shuttle bus from airport local bus
 I require a pick-up from 21/04/09 at am/pm
 Pick-ups are from the local bus stop only. See www.satyananda.net under "Swami Nirranjan Program 2009" for transport information.

ACCOMMODATION

Please select one (consult fee sheet available on the web for costs)

Standard shared room (3-5 ppl)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Camping	<input type="checkbox"/>	Large dorm	<input type="checkbox"/>	Shared with ensuite (3 or 4 people)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Outside Accommodation	<input type="checkbox"/>
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All enrolments to be accompanied by full payment. I understand the payment is non-refundable and non-transferable if cancellation occurs less than 24 hrs before arrival. If cancellation occurs after 24 hours and less than 72 hrs before arrival, 75% of the fee can be transferred to another course or stay within 12 months or a refund can be given less a cancellation fee of 50%. If cancellation occurs more than 72 hrs notice, full fee can be transferred to another course or stay within 12 months or a refund can be given less a cancellation fee of 25%.

- Full Bedding Required \$30
 I understand that during the Swami Nirranjan program there will be a lot of photographs being taken and agree to my photo being used.

Section 6 - PAYMENT

Enrolments with full payment may be made by fax, email or phone using your credit card, cheques (cheques to be made out to Yoga Association of Mangrove), money order or bank draft in Australian Dollars by mail.

Full payment now being paid \$

Mode of payment

- Cheque Money order MasterCard Bank Card Visa

Card No **5353 | 1652 | 7937 | 9856 |** Expiry date: / /

Name on Credit Card **Patricia F Morgan**

Signed Patricia F Morgan Date **23/03/09**

EMAIL OR FAX FORM TO:

SATYANANANDA YOGA® - MANGROVE
 300 Mangrove Creek Road
 Mangrove Creek, 2250 NSW
 phone: 02 4377 1171
 fax: 02 4377 1219
 email: mangrove@satyananda.net

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Amt \$ <u> </u>	Receipt No. <u> </u>
Amt \$ <u> </u>	Receipt No. <u> </u>
Entered into Database <input type="checkbox"/>	
Accommodation <u> </u>	