St. Stephen's College

Curating the Liminal Space:

Zen, *Being Peace*, and the Cultivation of Presence

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of St. Stephen's College

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

Fall 2018

Edmonton, Alberta

Abstract

This dissertation was an extended meditation on the nature of the *liminal space* as an essential aspect of contemplative pedagogy. The liminal space pertains to place and time—a threshold, transitional, the *in-between*. The primary focus was on the post-secondary classroom, that is, the space between teacher and student, and between/among students. This research uncovered qualities of the liminal space that are physical, theological, pedagogical, aesthetic, metaphorical, and—most importantly—experientially transformative. As an interdisciplinary, literature-based project, the dissertation employed a/r/tography (artist/researcher/teacher) as its overarching methodology. The art form involved curating a bricolage of poetic 'fragments' with the intention of creating a gestalt—the illumination of the liminal space as more than the sum of its parts. The liminal space was explored through theological reflection and contemplative inquiry with what is known as 'zen mind' or 'beginner's mind'. The classroom was defined as a sanctuary and an ideal setting for art making as a contemplative practice—a place where beauty can flourish. The role of the contemplative educator was considered as one who embodies mindfulness and endeavours to facilitate classrooms as safe places for compassionate listening and non-violence. The cultivation of presence within the liminal space is an act of kindness and compassion—ultimately an act of peacemaking. Thus, the dissertation called for what are named as a pedagogy of witnessing, and a pedagogy of peace.

Dedication

To Thich Nhat Hanh and the monastics of Plum Village

and

in memory of Thomas Merton and Elie Wiesel

Acknowledgements

I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks to the members of my doctoral committee for their guidance and kindness: Dr. Geoffrey Wilfong-Pritchard, Dr. Anne Hill, and Dr. Pamela Brett-MacLean.

My deepest gratitude goes to my spouse, P.J., and our children (not *children* any more!), Michael and Natalija, for their loving support.

Contents

Prelude:

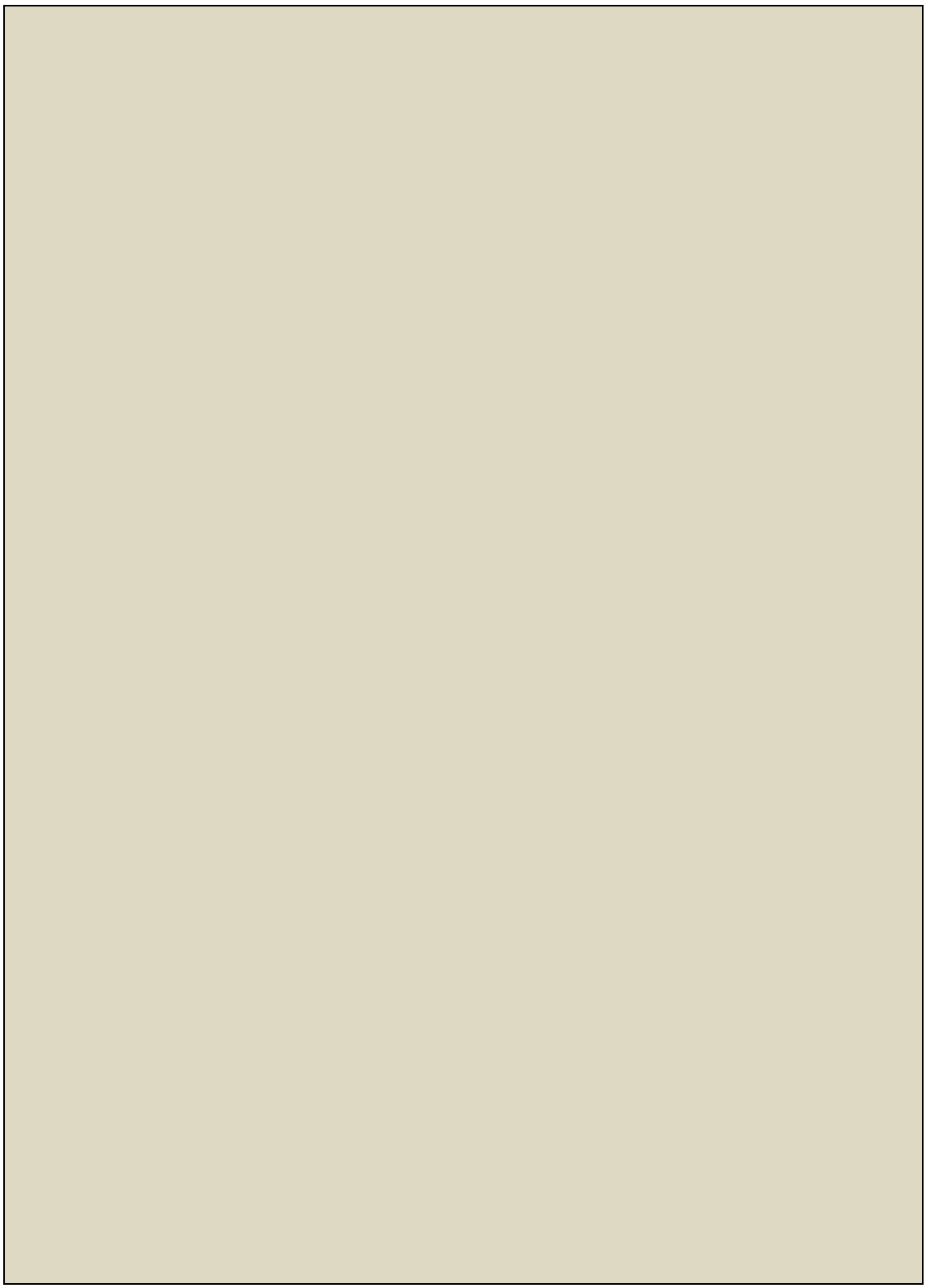
Tabula rasa (an empty slate),

five epigraphs,

and a letter to a silent monk.

Please turn these pages slowly.

Tabula rasa



In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities;

but in the expert's mind there are few.

—Shunryu Suzuki

The birth of Person is the aim of Pedagogy.

—M.C. Richards

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

—Mathew 5:19 (NIV)

Am I more than the sum of my experiences?

There is time involved. It may crystalize into shapes or sounds.

—Magdelena Abakanowicz

The whole world is medicine. What is the illness?

—Zen koan

Dear Father Louis,[1]

I am writing to thank you for your story about Mrs. Tayoshi and her paper crane.[2] It seemed to me a beautiful description of liminal space: the two of you steeped in a moment of silence. Professor Pamela asked me who I imagine to be my reader when I write my dissertation. Well, dear Father, it is you: "The Man with Deep Seeing Eyes."[3] I would also like to thank you for your poem entitled, "Stranger", especially theses two lines: "One bird sits still. Watching the work of God.[4]

I was inspired to write a few lines for you:

[1] The Trappist monk, Thomas Merton (1915-1968), was known to many as Father Louis.

[2] In 1964 several survivors of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, on a "world peace pilgrimage," visited Merton at his monastery, the Abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky, some of whom were "marked by the effect of their wounds." Merton wrote the following passage in his journal: "I think the one who impressed me most was the most silent of all, Mrs. Tayoshi. She was always thoughtful, said nothing, kept very much apart and yet was very warm and good. All she did was come up quietly and with a little smile slip a folded paper crane onto the table after I had read them my poem about paper cranes. The paper crane is the symbol of the Japanese peace movement. After they had all gone, it was Mrs. Tayoshi's paper crane that remained, silent and eloquent, as the most valid statement of the whole afternoon." Thomas Merton, *A Vow of Conversation: Journals 1964-1965 (*New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1988), 49-50.

[3] Catherine de Hueck Doherty quoted in J.S. Porter, *Thomas Merton: Hermit at the Heart of Things* (Ottawa: Novalis, 2008), 10. "Professor Pamela" is Dr. Pamela Brett-MacLean, my instructor in an arts-based research course (independent study), and a member of my doctoral committee.

[4] Thomas Merton, *The Collected Poems of Thomas Merton* (New York: New Directions, 1977), 289-90.

Poem for T.M.

Stranger, whom I never met,

Do you know that someone is listening?

A thousand paper cranes, calling out with one voice.

And you, one bird, still watching,

Tell me what you see now.

Is it deeper and cleaner still,

this silence?[5]

That's all for now Father. If it's alright with you, I'll write again.

Peace,

Norbert.

P.S. Wait. Speaking of birds, I also wanted to send along a few lines from Emily Dickinson.

She wrote these in pencil on a scrap—a fragment—of an envelope.

One note from
One Bird
is better
than a million words.[6]

[5] Norbert Krumins,"The Brilliance of Beauty: Theology and the Expressive Arts" (Master's thesis, St. Stephen's College, 2010), 71.

[6] Emily Dickinson, Marta L. Werner, Jen Bervin, *The Gorgeous Nothings* (New York: New Directions, 2013), 82.

Chapter 1

The Fragment and the Whole

This dissertation is an extended meditation on the nature of the *liminal space* in an educational context. The liminal space pertains to place and time—a threshold, transitional, the *in-between*. Liminality is often associated with being in the womb, dying, the wilderness, and to eclipses of the sun or moon.[7] Liminality has its roots in the field of anthropology, in the context of rites of passage. Victor Turner, expanding on the work of Arnold Van Gennep, wrote: "Van Gennep has shown that all rites of passage or 'transition' are marked by three phases: separation, margin (or *limen*, signifying 'threshold' in Latin), and aggregation . . . Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between . . ."[8]

While the liminal space will be further explored throughout the dissertation, suffice it to say for now, it pertains specifically to the post-secondary classroom, that is, the space between teacher and student, and between/among students. I believe that one of my key tasks as an educator is to cultivate presence within this space; I feel called to do so. Throughout this dissertation, the liminal will be considered theologically: as the threshold between the human and the Divine as grace-filled and numinous. Thus, the

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[7] Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process*: *Structure and Anti-Structure*, (London, UK: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), 95.

[8] Ibid., 94-95.

liminal space has qualities that are physical, theological, pedagogical, aesthetic, metaphorical, and—most importantly—experientially transformative. Ultimately, cultivating presence involves *being peace.*[9]

A/r/tography

A methodological stance:

"Tell all the Truth but tell it slant."

—Emily Dickinson.[10]

As an interdisciplinary, literature-based project, this dissertation employs a/r/tography (artist/researcher/teacher) as its overarching methodology. Rita Irwin and Stephanie Springgay write: "A/r/tography is a process of unfolding art and text together (art in this sense could mean poetry, music or other forms of artistic inquiry). As a research methodology that intentionally unsettles perception and complicates

[9] Here and in the sub-title of the dissertation I am using Zen Master, Thich Nhat Hanh's phrase, "being peace." Thich Nhat Hanh, Being Peace (Berkeley, CA: Paralax Press, 2005).

[10] Emily Dickinson, *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed. Thomas H. Johnson (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1960), 506.

understandings, how we come to know and live within space and time is subsequently altered."[11]

Moreover, as Carl Leggo et al suggest, "A/r/tography is a research methodology that is devoted to understanding the practices, processes, and experiences of teaching and learning."[12] As an interdisciplinary methodology, a/r/tography involves the crossing of boundaries: "For interdisciplinarians, the primary reason for crossing boundaries is to develop a more comprehensive understanding of a problem that would not otherwise be possible by examining it from the perspective of a single discipline."[13] A/r/tography is an appropriate choice for me as it encompasses both methodology and content: inquiring from the liminal space, and the liminal as the topic itself.

Organization/Design of the Dissertation

A/r/tography lends itself to a composition less rigid than the traditional 'five chapter model': the look and feel more of a garden than a building—organic and dynamic rather than architectural. "A/r/tography is not a formulaic-based methodology. Rather, it is a fluid orientation creating its rigor through continuous reflexivity and analysis."[14] As Sally Atkins writes, "Often, art-based researchers use evocative

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[11] Rita L. Irwin and Stephanie Springgay, "A/r/tography as Practice-based Research," in *Being with A/r/tography*, ed. Stephanie Springgay et al (Rotterdam/Taipei: Sense Publishers, 2008), xxvi.

[12] Carl Leggo et al, 'Lingering in liminal spaces: a/r/tography as living inquiry in a language arts class," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* Vol. 24, No. 2 (March-April, 2011): 252, accessed March 17, 2017, http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/09518391003641908.

[13] Allen F. Repko, *Interdisciplinary Research: process and theory*. 2nd ed. (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, 2012), 27.

[14] Stephanie Springgay, Rita L. Irwin, and Sylvia Wilson Kind, "A/r/tography as Living Inquiry Through Art and Text," *Qualitative Inquiry* vol.11, no. 6 (December, 2005): 903, accessed March 14, 2017, (http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1077800405280696

metaphorical chapter titles, share detailed and elaborated information about methodology and findings and interweave their literature review with their own conceptual framework."[15] This dissertation takes the form of a bricolage—an assortment of ideas gathered together, *curated*. This design is *rhizomatic* in nature: "A rhizome is an assemblage that moves and flows in dynamic momentum. The rhizome operates by variation, perverse mutation, and flows of intensities that penetrate meaning . . . It is an interstitial space, open and vulnerable where meanings and understandings are interrogated and ruptured."[16]

I take the advice of a 17th century Chinese painter:

> "To be without method is deplorable,
>
> but to depend entirely on method is worse."
>
> –Lu Ch'ai[17]

A/r/tography as a research methodology is akin to the creative practice of teaching itself. Ardra L. Cole and J. Gary Knowles write: "If we characterize teaching as a

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[15] Sally Atkins, "Where are the five chapters?: Challenges and opportunities in mentoring students with art-based Dissertations," in *Art as Research: Opportunities and Challenges*, ed. Shaun McNiff (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 61.

[16] Stephanie Springgay, "An Ethics of Embodiment" in *Being with A/r/tography*, ed. Stephanie Springgay et al (Rotterdam/Taipei: Sense Publishers, 2008), 153.

[17] Lu Ch'ai, "Discussion of the Fundamentals of Painting," in *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting*, 1679-1701, A facsimile of the 1887-1888 Shanghai edition with the text translated from the Chinese and edited by Mai-Mai Sze, (New York: Princeton University Press, 1963), 17.

form of creative expression—characterized as multi-modal, nonlinear, and multidimensional—then it makes sense to search for ways of understanding teaching that are also nonlinear, multimodal, and multidimensional."[18] Cole and Knowles wish to "challenge the norm and encourage inquiry into teaching that is inherently messy, complex, and holistic; that is, authentic, meaningful, and driven by both teacher-generated theories and practices."[19]

This dissertation is bound together by a series of fragments, like those in the prelude above, set aside as separate pieces of 'paper':

Miguel de Bestegui writes: "A fragment can be a part that reveals the whole; it can be the microcosm of a macrocosm. But it can also signal a reality of its own, juxtaposed in relation to another . . ."[20] Many of the 'fragments' contained in this dissertation take the form of creative non-fiction as pieces of correspondence. I take the

[18] Ardra L. Cole and J. Gary Knowles, *Researching Teaching: Exploring Teacher Development through Reflexive Inquiry* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2000), 63.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Miguel de Beistegui, *Proust as Philosopher: the Art of Metaphor*, trans, Dorothée Bonnigal Katz, with Simon Sparks and Miguel de Beistegui (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2013), 102.

lead from Rhiannon G. Marks, whose PhD Dissertation is in the field of literary criticism, who writes:

> In the same way that Shakespeare's *Hamlet* contains a play within a play, and Diego Velázquez's famous painting *Las Meninas* depicts the process of painting in the painting itself, my own work consists of an 'essay' within an 'essay'. By combining the correspondence [fictitious letters] and the more conventional academic chapters, it allows for a polyphonic kind of criticism where several voices or discourses can co-exist, where one genre seen next to another is revelatory in the sense that it draws attention to the characteristics of both genres involved."[21]

When we write letters by hand we slow down. If academic convention allowed it, I might be tempted to write this entire dissertation by hand. However, I would like to spare my dear readers the chore of deciphering my messy handwriting! I recall my sense of delight when years ago I first came upon Frederick Franck's classic, *The Zen of Seeing*, where he writes: "This book is handwritten because, in its way, it is a love letter, and love letters should not be type-set by compositors or computers. It may be a little slower to read, but there is no hurry, for what I want to share with you took a long time to experience."[22] In a way this dissertation is also a love letter—a testimony to my passion for teaching and learning.

These correspondences—these fragments—are a form of *poetic inquiry*.[23] The poetic voice is a contemplative voice. Jane Hirshfield writes: "Poetry's work is the clarification and magnification of being. Each time we enter its word-woven and musical invocation, we give ourselves over to a different mode of knowing: to poetry's knowing,

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[21] Rhiannon Marks, "Menna, Martha and Me: The Possibilities of Epistolary Criticism," in *Writing Creative: Determining the Form*, eds. Laura Tansley and Micaela Maftei (Canterbury, UK: Gylphi, 2015), 115.

[22] Frederick Franck, *The Zen of Seeing: Seeing/Drawing as* Meditation (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), vii.

[23] I am borrowing—and adapting—the phrase, "poetic inquiry" from Lynn Butler-Kisber, *Qualitative Inquiry: Thematic Narrative and Arts-Informed Perspectives*, (Los Angeles: Sage, 2010), 82.

and to the increase of existence it brings, unlike any other."[24] Poetry's sister is silence—a contemplative silence. As Patricia Leavy writes, "Poems, surrounded by space and weighted by silence, break through the noise to present an essence . . . Poetry as a research strategy challenges the fact-fiction dichotomy and offers a form for the evocative presentation of data."[25]

My methodological motivation:

"I want to introduce, I want to describe, I want to distribute mementos, amulets, I want to break out my wallet and pass around snapshots, I want to follow my nose."[26]

Zen, Theological Reflection, and Contemplative Inquiry

Within the framework of a/r/tography this research project is literature based and includes a hybrid of theological reflection and contemplative inquiry, adding further layers of interdisciplinarity to the project. A Zen sensibility—or lens—is used throughout. Zen Master Huang-po (died 850) offered this succinct definition of Zen:

> Zen is beyond all words.
> Away with all thinking and explaining

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[24] Jane Hirshfield, *Nine Gates: Entering the Mind of Poetry* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997), vii.

[25] Patricia Leavy, *Method Meets Art: Arts-Based Research Practice* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2009), 63.

[26] The voice of Buddy Glass, the fictional narrator in J.D. Salinger, *Raise High the Roofbeam, Carpenters and Seymour: An Introduction* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1959), 125.

> There is only mysterious silent understanding
> and no more.[27]

The above definition—or *non*-definition!—illustrates the evocative paradox often found in Zen; Huang-po uses words to describe that which is beyond words. The Zen Master's phrase functions outside of rational thought—that is, how is it possible to understand something without thinking? The student of Zen, like the artist, is drawn into these mysteries without expecting a rational answer; the beauty lies in the exploration. Zen in this context becomes a way of doing research. Valerie Janesick maintains: "Zen Mind is a critical, meditative, and thoughtful mind."[28] Ultimately, as Robert Aitken writes, ". . . the student who elects to pursue the path of Zen Buddhism gives up history and philosophy as basic tools and takes up the way of poetry. The way of poetry is the way of staring at the word or words with only the question, 'What is it?' occupying the mind."[29]

Of course, not every theologian is a poet, and not every poet is a theologian. For some, the art of poetry is strictly a secular undertaking. However, in the context of this dissertation, poetry—as well other artistic/curatorial

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[27] Quoted in Wolfgang Kopp, *Zen Beyond All Words: A Zen Master's Instructions*, trans. Barbara Wittenberg-Hasenauer, (Boston: MA: Charles E. Tuttle Co., Inc., 1996), no page number.

[28] Valerie J. Janesick, *Contemplative Qualitative Inquiry: Practicing the Zen of Research*, (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2015), 19.

[29] Robert Aitken, *Original dwelling place: Zen Buddhist essays* (Washington: Counterpoint, 1996), 106.

practices for that matter—is ultimately, theologically grounded. As the researcher, I am like Merton's bird, doing my best to sit still as I watch the work of God. I suggest, then—in the context of theological reflection—that poetic inquiry and contemplative inquiry are one and the same. At the least, the lines are blurred between the two methodologies. Likewise, as I blend theological reflection and poetic/contemplative inquiry with a/r/tography, I aim to invoke an interdisciplinary methodology which moves beyond categorization in an internal, circular continuum. Art/poetry serves theology/spirituality; contemplation serves teaching, learning, and research; research, in turn, serves further research and pedagogy. Ultimately, research, pedagogy, and artistic practice will hopefully serve to inspire others in the field.

I offer an important caveat here. As a 'student' of Zen, I do not purport to be fully conversant in its multi-faceted history and traditions, nor does my research aim to develop such expertise. Rather, I endeavour to maintain, *zen mind*, or *beginner's mind*, throughout both the research process and my teaching practice: "In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities; but in the expert's mind there are few."[30] As I tell students in my course, Mindfulness in Education and the Workplace, "we are in this together."

[30] Shunryu, *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* (New York: Weatherhill, 1971), 1.

This, then—*staring at the words*—is my central research question: What are the qualities—theological, spiritual, phenomenological, aesthetic, metaphorical, and pedagogical— of the liminal space? I also consider several subsidiary questions:

- How can a multi-leveled understanding of the liminal space help develop an educator's ability to offer "pedagogical presence" to his/her students?[31]
- How do we honour the classroom as sanctuary?
- How can art-making serve as a contemplative, pedagogical practice?
- How can an educator's own contemplative practices deepen her/his capacity to embody pedagogical presence in the classroom?

I briefly touch on the above topics in this introductory chapter and will explore them in more depth throughout the dissertation.

Contemplative Pedagogy

slow down, breath

stop, breathe

look, breathe

listen, breathe

this is presence

[31] Anne Hill, *Making Sense of Methods in the Classroom: A Pedagogical Presence* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Education, 2006).

This research is located within the relatively new field of contemplative pedagogy, a subset of Contemplative Studies. Arthur Zajonc writes:

> During the last fifteen years a quiet pedagogical revolution has taken place in colleges, universities, and community colleges across the United States and increasingly around the world. Often flying under the name "contemplative pedagogy," it offers to its practitioners a wide range of educational methods that support the development of student attention, emotional balance, empathetic connection, compassion, and altruistic behaviour, while also providing new pedagogical techniques that support creativity and the learning of course content.[32]

As noted above, I am using the lenses of theological reflection and contemplative inquiry. I see this approach as being in line with a spiritual research paradigm. Jing Lin, Rebecca L. Oxford, and Tom Culham write: "a spiritual research paradigm is especially relevant and needed for research that examines inward experience and that promotes meaning, purpose, interconnection with nature and other beings, inner peace, compassion, and tranquility of mind and heart."[33] One of the essential contemplative methods I employ here is mindfulness meditation: "By doing mindfulness as a sustained practice, there is . . . a possibility that the researcher will be bringing wisdom, compassion, and insight in conducting the research."[34] Indeed—wisdom, compassion, and insight are qualities worth cultivating, not only in the context of research, but within the practice of teaching as well.

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[32] Arthur Zajonc, "Contemplative Pedagogy: A Quiet Revolution in Higher Education" in *Contemplative Studies in Higher Education, New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, no. 134 (Summer 2013): 83, accessed Nov. 7, 2017, http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/tl.20057/epdf.

[33] Jing Lin, Rebecca L. Oxford, Tom Culham, "Introduction: the Urgent Need to Develop a Spiritual Research Paradigm," in *Toward a Spiritual Research Paradigm: Exploring New Ways of Knowing, Researching, and Being,* eds., Jing Lin, Rebecca L. Oxford, Tom Culham (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2016), xi.

[34] Ibid., xvi.

> "Mindfulness is the energy of being aware and awake to the present moment. It is the continuous practice of touching life deeply in every moment of daily life. To be mindful is to be truly alive, present and at one with those around you and with what you are doing."[35]

In my work as an educator—especially in developing and teaching the University of Alberta undergraduate course, Mindfulness in Education and the Workplace—I am indebted to the contributions of Arthur Zajonc, a leading scholar in the field of contemplative pedagogy. As I pursue this research I am using Zajonc's *Meditation as Contemplative Inquiry* as a key methodological guide:

> Contemplative inquiry rests on the sound moral foundations of humility and reverence. In addition, the practitioner cultivates his or her powers of concentrated attention, equanimity in the feeling of life, and a strengthened resolve. On this basis, one undertakes meditation as cognitive breathing, selecting a word, image, sense content, or situation for concentrated attention and open awareness. The afterimage or echo that emerges in Simone Weil's "void" reflects a threshold crossing of consciousness. The object of our attention recedes or disappears, and one senses the subtle presence of another reality. In the traditional language of world spirituality, one has crossed the *threshold* [italics mine] between material reality and that of the spirit.[36]

As noted above, I weave theological reflection throughout the dissertation, in particular by employing what Patricia O'Connell Killen and John De Beer have described

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[35] In both my personal life and teaching practice I have adopted the above definition of mindfulness from the Plum Village Mindfulness Practice Center in France, founded by Thich Nhat Hanh. https://plumvillage.org/?s=mindfulness+is+the+energy+of+being&submit=Go. Accessed February 26, 2018.

[36] Arthur Zajonc, *Meditation as Contemplative Inquiry: When Knowing Becomes Love* (Great Barrington, MA: Lindisfarne Books, 2009), 178.

as "critical reading" and "creative conversation[s] with theological texts."[37]

Furthermore, when reading *The Art of Theological Reflection*, I was delighted to discover Killen and De Beer's openness to the use of art making:

> Regardless of the particular reflective process we use, we must give shape and form to the feelings, images, insights, and musings that come to us during reflection. We can write or draw them in a journal, verbalize them in a prayer, sculpt them in clay, or express them in dance. We can use whatever medium is comfortable and effective, but in some way we must exteriorize our reflection, move it out of the realm of thoughts.[38]

"Putting a frame around a thing to examine it leaves out a lot of poetry."[39]

Artist/Researcher/Teacher as Curator

> To make a collection is to find, acquire, organize and store items, whether in a room, a house, a library, a museum or a warehouse. It is also, inevitably, a way of thinking about the world—the connections and principles that produce a collection contain assumptions, juxtapositions, findings, experimental possibilities and associations. Collection-making, you could say, is a method of producing knowledge.[40]

As the title of this dissertation indicates, I am interested in *curating* the liminal space—the various fragments gathered together. Much like an art gallery curator, as *researcher* I seek out and identify images, experiences, and ideas, aiming to bring them together to create a gestalt: the liminal space as more than a sum of its parts. Here,

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[37] Patricia O'Connell Killen and John De Beer, *The Art of Theological Reflection* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2010), 107-109.

[38] Ibid., 80.

[39] Conceptual artist, Lee Mingwei, in an interview with Mary Jane Jacob, *Buddha Mind in Contemporary Art*, eds. Jacquelynn Baas and Mary Jane Jacob (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2004), 232. I smile at the irony here: after all, I have enclosed Mingwei's phrase within a frame.

[40] Hans Ulrich Obrist (with Asad Raza), *Ways of Curating* (London: Penguin Books, 2014), 39.

curatorial practice—in the sense of collection-making—I see as a form of theological reflection. "Collections unlock themselves once a single piece is brought to voice."[41]

Over the past few years I have gathered a collection of touchstones—key flashes of insight. These touchstones are deeply meaningful to me as they have all been experienced as 'thin moments'. They serve as markers along my spiritual journey. Each of these experiences has informed my teaching practice and my ongoing theological reflection. I see each touchstone as a theological point of entry, or *point vierge* (French: "virginal point").[42]

These touchstones are within the realm of the "tacit dimension." According to Sandy Sela-Smith,

> The tacit dimension of personal knowledge is that internal place where experience, feeling, and meaning join together to form both a picture of the world and a way to navigate that world. Tacit knowledge is a continually growing, multileveled, deep-structural organization that exists for the most part outside of ordinary awareness and is the foundation on which all other knowledge stands. This deep dimension of knowledge is under construction each time a new experience is introduced.[43]

One example of a touchstone is found within my introductory letter, above, to

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[41] Erdmut Wizisla, "Preface" in *Walter Benjamin's Archive: Images Texts, Signs*, eds. Ursula Marx, Gudrun Schwarz, Michael Schwarz, and Erdmut Wizisla (London: Verso, 2007), 4.

[42] I first came across the phrase "point vierge" from Thomas Merton: "The first chirps of the waking day birds mark the '*point vierge*' of the dawn under a sky as yet without real light, a moment of awe and inexpressible innocence . . ." Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1966), 117.

[43] Sandy Sela-Smith, "Heuristic Research: A Review and Critique of Moustakas's Method," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, Volume 42, Issue 3 (July, 2002): 60, accessed March 29, 2017, http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0022167802423004.

Thomas Merton where I referred to his encounter with Mrs. Tayoshi. When I first read of this meeting, I was deeply moved. Merton and Mrs. Tayoshi both exemplified the notion of *being peace*. This and other theological points of entry are woven throughout the dissertation.

Curare

Artist, researcher, and teacher meet *curator* in another form; I seek to support, *take care of,* my students. Hans Ulrich Obrist traces the history of the word, curator:

> Being a curator is considered to be a fairly new profession. The activities it combines into one role, however, are still well expressed by the meaning of its Latin etymological root, *curare*: *to take care of*. In ancient Rome, *curators* were civil servants who took care of some rather prosaic, if necessary, functions: they were responsible for overseeing public works, including the empire's aqueducts, bathhouses and sewers. In the medieval period, the focus shifted to a more metaphysical aspect of human life: the *curatus* was a priest who took care of the souls of a parish. By the late eighteenth century, *curator* came to signify the task of looking after a museum's collection. Different kinds of caretaking have sprung from this root word over the centuries, but the work of the contemporary curator remains surprisingly close to the sense in *curare* of cultivating, growing, pruning and trying to help people and their shared contexts to thrive.[44]

Obrist's notion of helping "people and their shared contexts to thrive" would also, in my view, describe an authentic pedagogical practice *par excellence*.

Being present within the liminal space is an ethical act. Every crossing of the threshold has the potential to be a moment of prayer. As Zajonc remarks, "Every contemplative practice session should begin by passing through the portal of humility and finding the path of reverence."[45] The path of reverence is a pedagogical path. When we walk *with* our students we are showing respect; this, for lack of a more elegant word,

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[44] Obrist, 24-25. Italics in original.

[45] Zajonc, *Meditation as Contemplative Inquiry,* 25.

is *method*. I often invite my students on walking meditations. I introduce the meditation with the words of John O'Donohue, who suggests that the path of reverence is the path of beauty: "When we walk on the earth with reverence, beauty will decide to trust us. The rushed heart and the arrogant mind lack the gentleness and patience to enter that embrace. Beauty is mysterious, a slow presence who waits for the ready, expectant heart."[46]

Dear Father Louis,

I thought you might like to know that I spent some time in the presence of your old friend, Zen master, Thich Nhat Hanh—the man you once called your "brother."[47] His students—and I count myself as one of them—affectionately refer to him as Thay (Vietnamese for teacher). I attended a six-day mindfulness retreat led by Thay at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario. I was among 1,300 educators attending the retreat from across North America. The retreat was entitled, "Mindfulness for Educators: Happy Teachers Will Change the World." Each day began at 5:30AM with a silent walking meditation led by Thay: 1,300 people slowly moving in silence as the sun rose. I found these to be profound moments of liminality (when is the liminal not profound?).

Thay is teaching me how to walk: "Although we walk all the time, our walking is usually more like running. When we walk like that, we print anxiety and sorrow on the Earth. We have to walk in a way that we only print peace and serenity on the Earth.

[46] John O'Donohue, *Beauty: the Invisible Embrace* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004), 24.

[47] Quoted by David Steindel-Rast in the forward to Thich Nhat Hanh, *Living Buddha, Living Christ* (New York: Penguin Group, 2007), xiv.

When we are able to take one step peacefully and happily, we are working for the cause of peace and happiness for the whole of humankind.[48]

Walking meditation is Walking Methodology.[49]

Father, I thought you might appreciate Thay's words, especially, "we are working for the cause of peace and happiness for the whole of humankind." I thought of you often while at the retreat. I walk in your footsteps. You are *my* brother.

Peace, Norbert.

Separation and Reunion

Parker Palmer famously wrote: "We teach who we are."[50] I believe it is important for educators—and researchers—to *know* who we are: to be aware of our way of being in the world. With each worldview—and ways of being—there are inherent strengths and biases. We bring these strengths and biases to our classroom. I have found the work of W. Paul Jones particularly helpful for identifying and understanding my own theological worldview. Jones developed five distinct yet overlapping theological

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[48] Thich Nhat Hanh, *Peace is Every Step: the Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 28.

[49] A few words are in order here on what I mean by Walking Methodology. It has a two-fold meaning. First, when we walk mindfully we are paying attention; we open ourselves to insight. Finding a way to insight is research practice—research as contemplative inquiry. Just prior to writing the above paragraph I left my desk and went for a short meditation walk. This was my way—my method—of getting to the next paragraph. Second, when we walk *with* our students—as modelled by Thich Nhat Hanh—we are serving pedagogy; we are offering them Hill's "pedagogical presence."

[50] Parker J. Palmer, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*, (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 1.

typologies which he describes as "family resemblances" or "worlds."[51] Within each world there is a rhythm which flows between what he calls *obsessio* (dilemma) and *epiphania* (resolution). My dominant world is World One, where one moves between "separation and reunion."[52] Jones names those, like me, who function within this world, "the alien."[53] In my darkest theological moments I feel disconnected from God, or even worse, fear that God does not exist–that ultimately I am alone, an alien. In my brightest moments I feel oneness with the Divine.

My 'letters' to Thomas Merton are to someone who might have understood my strengths and weaknesses; he exemplified a World One sensibility.[54] A Theological World may also be experienced as an *aesthetic* world. For residents of World One, a sense of the aesthetic is especially present, in which "anywhere, anything can become a sacramental aperture."[55] We arrive at atonement *experientially*: through a "'tearing of the veil' . . . whereby a different dimension is opened."[56] As a Roman Catholic I was raised in a world described succinctly by Michael Greeley:

> Catholics live in an enchanted world, a world of statues and holy water, stained glass and votive candles, saints and religious medals, rosary beads

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[51] W. Paul Jones, *Theological Worlds: Understanding the Alternative Rhythms of Christian Belief* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989).

[52] Ibid., 42-43.

[53] Ibid., 45-57.

[54] Ibid., 115.

[55] Ibid., 112.

[56] Ibid., 187.

> and holy pictures. But these Catholic paraphernalia are mere hints of a deeper and more pervasive religious sensibility which inclines Catholics to see the Holy lurking in creation. As Catholics, we find our houses and our world haunted by a sense that the objects, events, and persons of daily life are revelations of grace.[57]

I am a Cradle Catholic; however, in recent years this has been primarily by way of practice rather than literal belief (as normally associated with Catholicism, e.g. belief in a virgin birth). Despite my Catholic roots and practice, I have been increasingly drawn to the notion of God as *panentheistic*. This is more in line with Paul Tillich's description of God, not as a being, but as "being itself or . . . the ground of being"[58] and, for that matter, the Buddhist non-theistic view. My theological roots are predominantly Christian and my cultural bias is Western. However, I have been developing what I call a Zen sensibility and am drawn evermore to the East. In a sense I find myself, as the saying goes, "caught between two cultures" (and theologies). To some extent, then, there are times I feel as though I do not fit in; the notion of 'alien' seems to apply in more ways than one.

This place between two cultures/theologies is in itself a liminal space. I have often referred to myself (with a half smile) as a *ChristZen*. Several years ago I came across this term in an article by Kenneth Arnold which describes an experiment in reading the Gospel of Thomas with 'Zen mind' or 'unthinking mind'.[59] This liminal space

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[57] Andrew Greeley, *The Catholic Imagination*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 1.

[58] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (Chicago, Il: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 235.

[59] Kenneth Arnold, "The Circle of the Way: Reading the Gospel of Thomas as a ChristZen Text," *Cross Currents*, vol. 51, no. 4 (Winter, 2002): accessed Nov. 5, 2017, http://www.crosscurrents.org/arnoldwinter2002.htm

is a place of unknowing. I am, perhaps, an exercise in contradictions. I am a Catholic, a Zen Buddhist; I am both. Two of my most important influences are Thomas Merton (Catholic) and Thich Nhat Hanh (Zen Buddhist). Both Merton and Nhat Hanh, in many of their writings, have seen beyond such apparent contradictions.

Classroom/Art Studio as Sanctuary

As an associate faculty member of St. Stephen's College I am committed to our mission to offer "sacred spaces for learning and transformation."[60] I am inspired by the words of Jackie Seidel:

> Etymologically, *contemplate* derives from Latin *contemplari*, meaning "to gaze attentively" (> Latin. *con*, "with" + *templum,* temple). A *temple* is . . . defined as space marked out for "observation," a "consecrated space," a "sanctuary," or a "sacred space" (ODEE, 1966, p. 908). Because they are not normally used in relation to the inherited institutions of secular, industrial society, words like *sanctuary* and *temple* have the potential to disrupt or deconstruct common images of school and pedagogy. To speak such words, then, in relation to pedagogy, curriculum, and schooling at all levels might summon forth a new kind of responsibility to this language.[61]

In my classroom I often create a studio environment and introduce students to art making as a contemplative practice. I aim to facilitate what Shaun McNiff refers to as a *temenos*: "a sacred place that acts as a vessel of transformation."[62] Here, as students

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[60] http://ststephenscollege.ca/about-us/mission-values/#sthash.pnOvg2wI.dpbs, accessed November 6, 2017.

[61] Jackie Seidel, "Meditations on Contemplative Pedagogy as Sanctuary," *Journal of Contemplative Inquiry*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2014): 142. https://www.z2systems.com/np/clients/contemind/neonPage.jsp?pageId=8&, accessed March 16, 2017. Note: this article is published on a website that is password protected and therefore may not be readily available to my readers. Dr. Seidel has given me permission to use this article for educational purposes.

[62] Shaun McNiff, *Art Heals: How Creativity Cures the Soul* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2004), 30. *Temenos* is Greek for "sacred enclosure."

work together the liminal is palpable. As McNiff writes, “I believe that creativity is an intelligence that is broader than the experience of an individual person acting alone. It is an energy that exists within an environment, and as an artist I strive to collaborate with it.”[63]

The art studio is where I am most at home as an educator. In several of my courses I use intermodal, expressive arts—art making which includes various modalities such as painting, sculpture, music, dance, poetry—as contemplative/meditative practices. The expressive arts can be explored in solitude or in a group setting such as a studio where participants explore various artistic media individually and as an ensemble in an environment sometimes called an *atelier.* Although I am developing a pedagogical approach in my research and teaching practice, I owe much of my thinking to the field of expressive arts therapy, as defined by Daria Halprin: "Expressive arts therapy proposes a radical approach, joining art and psychology to facilitate embodied learning and expressiveness. Based on the use of intermodal arts, expressive arts therapy sees the relationship between imagination and sensory expressiveness as the pathway for drawing forth awareness, creativity, and change."[64] I would place the expressive arts within the realm of *embodied* contemplative pedagogy. Michelle Lelwica writes: "The beauty of embodied contemplative pedagogy is that it has the potential to help students

[63] Shaun McNiff, *Trust the Process: An Artist’s Guide to Letting Go*, (Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications, 1998), 4.

[64] Daria Halprin, *The Expressive Body in Life, Art and Therapy: Working with Movement, Metaphor, and Meaning* (London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2003), 74.

make meaningful connections between what they learn in our classes, the issues they face in their own lives, and the problems in the world around them."[65]

A further example of embodied contemplative pedagogy is in order here. Thomas Coburn, who teaches at Naropa University, begins every class with a bow: "The bow is a very simple, somatic introduction to 'contemplative education', Naropa's core institutional activity. Because it is an action, it is immediately intelligible—to Buddhists and non-Buddhists, to the spiritually inclined and secularists, and to all ages, including my three-year-old grandson."[66]

This notion of somatic action is a critical aspect of the artistic process as well. I have experienced firsthand the power of art making as this embodied, contemplative process. Art making slows us down. It helps us to attend. For this reason alone, art making has great potential as a learning—and life enhancing—tool, and as a valuable form of theological reflection.

Slowing down is an important element of a Zen sensibility. Several years ago, I came across the writings of D. T. Suzuki. I recall in particular, reading the following passage for the first time: “Zen in its essence is the art of seeing into the nature of one’s

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[65] Michelle M. Lelwica, "Embodied Contemplative Learning: Aikido as a Case Study," in *Meditation and the Classroom, Contemplative Pedagogy for Religious Studies,* eds. Judith Simmer-Brown and Fran Grace (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2011), 144.

[66] Thomas B. Coburn, "The Convergence of Liberal Education and Contemplative Education – Inevitable?" In *Meditation and the Classroom*, 4.

own being, and it points the way from bondage to freedom."[67] This was an 'aha' moment for me: in my mind, Suzuki had effectively described the expressive arts! I am not simply drawing an analogy between Zen and the expressive arts; Zen and the expressive arts are *one*.[68] The potential for the expressive arts studio to marry revelation with action, in my mind, is practical theology at its best. I will discuss this synonymy of Zen and the expressive arts in more detail later.

Assessment/Validity

Given the fluid/organic dynamics at play in a/r/tographic research there are inherent challenges in developing appropriate assessment criteria. Stephanie Springgay writes:

> A/r/tography is a mode of thinking about or theorizing multiplicities. It is not about framing rules or understanding principles, but about the possibilities of intercorporeal encounters. Instead of requiring logical certainty and the guarantee of universal validity a/r/tography is embedded in imagination, experimentation, uniqueness, and conjecture—openings that seek to provoke and generate meaning often using metaphors and metonymic relationships.[69]

A consideration of contemporary trends in approaching the question of validity in qualitative research may be of some help in this regard. Drawing on a variety of studies on validation, Robin Whittemore, Susan K. Chase, and Carol Lynn Mandle offer the following guidelines: "Credibility, authenticity, criticality, and integrity are

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[67] D.T. Suzuki, *Zen Buddhism: Selected Writings of D.T. Suzuki*, ed. William Barrett (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1956), 3.

[68] Krumins, "The Brilliance of Beauty", 81.

[69] Stephanie Springgay, *Body Knowledge and Curriculum: Pedagogies of Touch in Youth and Visual Culture* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2008), 41.

considered primary criteria, whereas explicitness, vividness, creativity, thoroughness, congruence, and sensitivity are considered secondary criteria."[70]

It is not my intention here to provide an exhaustive—or *exhausting*!—list of assessment criteria. However, the wide variety of qualitative descriptors which could be used in the assessment of a/r/tographic inquiry is noteworthy:

> We acknowledge the interpretive nature and nurture of our work, and revel in its strength, durability, malleability, tensility, reflectivity, reflexivity, applicability, imaginativity, and tangibility, as well as verisimilitude, width, coherence, insightfulness, parsimony, various kinds and forms of truth, fairness, ontological and educative authenticity, catalytic and tactical authenticity, comprehensiveness, substantive contribution, aesthetic merit, impact, expression of a reality, coherence, plausibility, imaginative aesthetic transaction, empathy, and authenticity . . . Those are all criteria by which we may assess a/r/tography in a contemporary, meaningful manner.[71]

Ethical Concerns

As I described earlier, this dissertation is literature based and does not involve research with 'human subjects'. Although I am *present* as the researcher and include my personal worldview and theological reflection, the dissertation is not a self-study. Therefore, the research does not pose any potential harm to myself or others. In order to provide context, from time to time I refer to my experiences in the classroom as an educator; however, this is anecdotal in nature and will not in any way identify directly or indirectly my students or other persons. For these reasons, a formal ethics review was not required. This is in accordance with the ethical standards of St.

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[70] Robin Whittemore, Susan K. Chase, and Carol Lynn Mandle, "Validity in Qualitative Research," *Qualitative Health Research* vol. 11, no. 4 (July, 2001): 529, accessed March 23, 2017, http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/104973201129119299.

[71] Peter Gouzouasis, "Toccatta on Assessment, Validity & Interpretation," in *Being with A/r/tography*, ed. Stephanie Springgay et al (Rotterdam/Taipei: Sense Publishers, 2008), 231.

Stephen's College.[72]

Beginner's Mind

> "The beginner's mind is the mind of compassion. When our mind is compassionate it is boundless.[73]

In this chapter I have introduced this interdisciplinary, a/r/tographic dissertation exploring the qualities of the liminal space in the context of an adult learning environment. This dissertation is framed within the field of contemplative pedagogy. I consider the liminal space through a variety of methodological lenses with the goal of deepening my ability to be present with my students—to model the notion of *being peace*. I hope to add to the literature by focussing, contemplatively, on the liminal space as theologically grounded. This will be accomplished by combining critical thinking with a sense of creativity and 'beginner's mind'.

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[72] "St. Stephen's College Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans." http://ststephenscollege.ca/wp-content/uploads/MPS%20Manual/Ethics%20Review/1.%20Ethical%20Conduct%20for%20Research%20Involving%20Humans%20Policy.pdf , accessed March 14, 2017. Some of my earlier research involving human subjects is quoted later in this dissertation (my Master's thesis). As part of that research a full ethics review was done and followed accordingly.

[73] Shunryu Suzuki, *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, 2.

Chapter 2

Recovering Our Original Unity:

The Transformative Qualities of the Liminal Space

> The deepest level of communication is not communication but communion. It is wordless. It is beyond words, and it is beyond speech, and it is beyond concept. Not that we discover a new unity. We discover an older unity . . . we are already one. But we imagine that we are not. And what we have to recover is our original unity. What we have to be is what we are.[74]

The Liminality of Interbeing

The above quotation from Thomas Merton might well describe the spiritual intimacy of the liminal space. Merton's words capture an important aspect of his thinking—akin to the Buddhist notion of *interbeing* as developed by Thich Nhat Hanh. Nhat Hanh's interbeing, or the "interdependence of all things" is drawn from the classic Buddhist text, the *Avatamsaka Sutra*. As Nhat Hanh suggests, "Cause and effect are no longer perceived as linear, but as a net, not a two-dimensional one, but a system of countless nets interwoven in all directions in multidimensional space . . . One is present in all and all are present in one."[75] The net to which Nhat Hanh refers is often described in Buddhist literature as *Indra's Net*: an interwoven web of jewels, each reflecting the

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[74] Thomas Merton, *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton* (New York: New Directions, 1973), 308.

[75] Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Sun My Heart: Reflections on Mindfulness, Concentration, and Insight* (Berkeley, CA: Parrallax Press, 2010), 30.

light of the others. This has profound ecological and ethical implications; when we harm the planet—or someone else—we harm ourselves.

> "If you are a poet, you will see clearly that there is a cloud floating in this sheet of paper. Without a cloud there will be no water; without water, the trees cannot grow; and without trees, you cannot make paper. So the cloud is in here. The existence of this page is dependent on the existence of the cloud."[76]

While interbeing presents an ontological position, the notion of inherent multidimensionality can also be viewed theologically. I am reminded of Tillich's Ground of Being as well as a metaphor drawn from Jewish mystical theology. Arthur Green writes: "The God who fills the world has a thousand, a million, a billion infinite faces . . . God is both the source and the flow, the hidden root and the endless branches."[77]

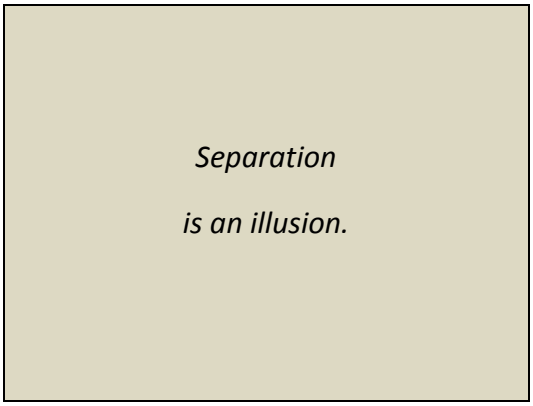
When we are in the liminal space—to borrow a word often used by Thich Nhat Hanh—we "inter-are" with each other. Interbeing, or to use a more secular-friendly word, *connectedness*, has significant implications for modern science:

> Connectedness is the defining feature of the new worldview—connectedness as an organizing principle of the universe, connectedness between the "outer world" of manifest phenomena and the "inner world" of lived experience, and ultimately, connectedness among people and between human beings and the larger world. While philosophers and spiritual teachers have long spoken about connectedness, a scientific worldview of connectedness could have sweeping

[76] Nhat Hanh, *Being Peace*, 51.

[77] Arthur Green, *Seek My Face: a Jewish Mystical Theology* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2012), 47-48.

influence in "shifting the whole," given the role of science and technology in the modern world.[78]



Communitas

From an anthropological perspective, liminality gives birth to *communitas*—the Latin term used by Victor Turner, and further developed by Edith Turner and others. Edith Turner writes:

> What is communitas? The characteristics of communitas show it to be almost beyond strict definition, with almost endless variations. Communitas often appears unexpectedly. It has to do with the sense felt by a group of people when their life together takes on full meaning. It could be called a collective *satori* or *unio mystica*, but the phenomenon is far more common than the mystical states. Communitas can only be conveyed properly through stories.[79]

I will take Turner's note and offer a brief personal story. On the final day of the St. Catharines retreat referred to earlier I took part in a 'transmission' ceremony together with approximately 100 other participants. During the ceremony, conducted by

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[78] Peter Senge et al, *Presence: Exploring Profound Change in People, Organizations, and Society* (New York: Random House, 2005), 188.

[79] Edith Turner, *Communitas: the Anthropology of Collective Joy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 1. "Satori" is often defined as enlightenment. "Unio Mystica" is the union of the mystic's soul with God.

Thich Nhat Hanh, we received "The Five Mindfulness Trainings."[80] After reciting each training we touched the ground with our hands. The following is an abridged version of the trainings:

> *First Mindfulness Training: Reverence for Life*. Aware of the suffering caused by the destruction of life, I am committed to cultivating the insight of interbeing and compassion and learning ways to protect the lives of people, animals, plants, and minerals. I am determined not to kill, not to let others kill, and not to support any act of killing in the world, in my thinking or in my way of life.
>
> *Second Mindfulness Training: True Happiness.* Aware of the suffering caused by exploitation, social injustice, stealing, and oppression, I am committed to practicing generosity in my thinking, speaking, and acting. I am determined not to steal and not to possess anything that should belong to others; and I will share my time, energy, and material resources with those who are in need.
>
> *Third Mindfulness Training: True Love.* Aware of the suffering caused by sexual misconduct, I am committed to cultivating responsibility and learning ways to protect the safety and integrity of individuals, couples, families, and society. Knowing that sexual desire is not love, and that sexual activity motivated by craving always harms myself as well as others, I am determined not to engage in sexual relations without true love and a deep, long-term commitment made known to my family and friends.
>
> *Fourth Mindfulness Training: Deep Listening and Loving Speech.* Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful speech and the inability to listen to others, I am committed to cultivating loving speech and compassionate listening in order to relieve suffering and to promote reconciliation and peace in myself and other people, ethnic and religious groups, and nations.
>
> *Fifth Mindfulness Training: Nourishment and Healing.* Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful consumption, I am committed to cultivating good health, both physical and mental, for myself, my family, and my society by practicing mindful eating, drinking, and consuming. I am determined not to gamble, or to use alcohol, drugs, or any other products which contain toxins, such as certain

[80] Nhat Hanh writes: "In the Buddhist tradition in which I practice, people don't just read the Five Mindfulness Trainings, they receive them from a teacher . . . When we have the energy of a whole community that has witnessed us make a commitment to the trainings, it's easier to practice. We can draw on the strength of the collective consciousness." *The Mindfulness Survival Kit: Five Essential Practices* (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 2014), 23-24.

> websites, electronic games, TV programs, films, magazines, books, and conversations.[81]

As part of the ceremony I was given a 'Dharma name'[82] by my Dharma teacher, Sister Pine. The name, written on my certificate is "Beauty Way of the Heart." Sister Pine facilitated the small group sessions I attended during the retreat. In one of the discussions I spoke of my love of beauty. I described to the group how the retreat had been a profound experience of beauty for me—that in my view, mindfulness is in many ways about paying attention to the beauty around us. When Sister Pine presented me with my "Five Mindfulness Trainings Certificate" and I read my Dharma name I was very touched. This ceremony—this experience of communitas within the liminal space—stands as one of the most poignant and spiritually charged experiences of my life.

Liminal Spaces, Thin Places

> "The Celtic Mind was not burdened by dualism. It did not separate what belongs together."[83]

Celtic Christianity has given us the metaphor of *thin places*. Liminal spaces are thin places. This is where we can find Merton's *point vierge*. As Marcus Borg writes, "A

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[81] Ibid., 27-31. The full text of these trainings appears on a certificate I received following the ceremony. A Sangha is a community of mindfulness practitioners.

[82] 'Dharma': the Buddhist teachings. It is one of the 'Three Jewels': the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha.

[83] John O'Donohue, *Anam Cara: A Book of Celtic Wisdom* (New York: Harper Collins, 1998), xvii.

thin place is anywhere our hearts are opened. To use sacramental language, a thin place is a sacrament of the sacred, a mediator of the sacred, a means whereby the sacred becomes present to us. A thin place is a means of grace."[84] The transmission ceremony I described above was such an event. When we are in a thin place we feel most deeply the beauty of non-separation. This is especially significant for those of us in Jones's Theological World One where we capture "the fragrances of thin remembrances, hints of new beauty."[85]

This sense of non-separation can also be found in the Japanese *Chado*, or Way of Tea. The Way of Tea serves as a metaphor for a way of life. The four main principles which guide *Chado* are harmony, respect, purity, and tranquility. This is a peaceful environment, where silence reigns. I have been fortunate to take part in several tea ceremonies. Without exception these were liminal experiences—of communitas.

The Music of Silence

> ". . . to hearken to the music of silence, the divine life breath of the universe."[86]

I would like to turn now to the silence of the liminal space. I invite you, dear

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[84] Marcus J. Borg, *The Heart of Christianity: Rediscovering a Life of Faith* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003), 156.

[85] Jones, *Theological Worlds*, 110.

[86] David Steindl-Rast, *The Music of Silence: a sacred journey through the hours of the day*, (Berkeley, CA: Ulysses Press, 2002), 116.

reader, to listen with me to the music of silence: silence as a phenomenon of wonder, as a glimpse of the sacred, as an element of presence.

The Curator of Silences

I am the curator of silences

I've been wandering the desert for a thousand years it seems

Collecting one silence after another, then nourishing each one

I will lift them up for you to see

If I could I would hand them to you

Hold them carefully, like you would a child

These silences, some

are like the wisp of a dream,

just beyond the grasp of memory

Others, deafening: Auschwitz, Rwanda

Others still are gentle, gentle

These are the ones I long for—the gentle ones

Silence filled with music

Filled with God

These silences cannot be contained

Only held, gently, gently

The Angel Flying through the Room

I have found myself slipping into a softer tone. The form here is like a movie that starts with a glimpse of the end of the story and then rewinds to the beginning. Here is the initial glimpse: I am in the Henry Moore Sculpture Centre in the Art Gallery of Ontario. Moore's magnificent sculptures gaze at me, silently. I am listening to a recording of forty voices performing *Spem in allium*, composed by Thomas Tallis, c. 1570. A shiver runs up my spine. My soul is filled with wonder. There is an elderly man performing an interpretive dance to the music. At first I think his performance is part of the installation, then realize he is just a seventy-something man moving to the music, silently. There are perhaps another thirty people in the gallery of all ages, some sitting, some standing or walking, several lying on floor. No one speaks. It is as though no one dares to speak in the presence of such beauty. One young man sits on a chair. By his gesture he appears to be praying. A moment later a woman (his lover I presume) begins to gently rub his shoulders. Is he still praying? Is anyone else in the room praying? My heart says yes. One woman wipes a tear from her eye. Is this a cathedral or an art gallery? I think it is both. I can only describe this as a *spiritual* experience.

The installation by the artist Janet Cardiff is called "The Forty Part Motet." Forty black speakers are spread out throughout the room; one for each of the forty choir voices. As Cardiff suggests, "Most people experience this piece [*Spem in allium*] in their living rooms in front of only two speakers . . . Even in a live concert the audience is separated from the individual voices. Only the performers are able to hear the person

standing next to them singing a different harmony. I wanted to be able to climb inside the music."[87] This is precisely what I want to do: *to climb inside the music*–to climb inside the *silence* of the music. I am reminded of what the video artist Bill Viola said in an interview with Mary Jane Jacob:

> In the *zendo*—fifty minutes of quiet stillness in a room of solitary individuals—time opens up in an unbelievable way. A little bird chirping outside becomes an event of great magnitude. When time and space open up, all of a sudden there's a lot of room for you. In quiet moments you get an idea, or a thought, or a revelation that you wouldn't have had if you were in a hurry to get somewhere. Our lives require quiet innocent moments like these, so we absolutely have to make spaces—particularly in our world of compressed time—or else our spirits will get choked off . . . We must take time back into ourselves, to let our consciousness breathe and our cluttered minds be still and silent. This is what art can do and what museums can be in today's world.[88]

Silence in the midst of sound: it seems a contradiction. Nevertheless, I would like to follow this notion by considering the following question: In the context of the art gallery experience described above, what is silence from a theological perspective? Stan Link offers one compelling answer:

> There is a folk expression in German for those strangely synchronized moments of silence punctuating even the liveliest group conversation: *Ein Engel fliegt durch das Zimmer*. Meaning literally that 'an angel is flying through the room', the saying has silence responding to the divine. Similarly, it is telling that we are said to *observe* rituals and often watch and remain silent in the presence of actions connecting the metaphysical with the mundane. Although there may come moments when music, speech or other noise is called for, sacred rituals, settings and feelings . . . more often elicit stillness. A sense of 'reverence' seems

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[87] Janet Cardiff, "Janet Cardiff: Forty Part Motet" Winnipeg Art Gallery, accessed July 23, 2013, http://wag.ca/art/exhibitions/upcoming-exhibitions/display,exhibition/125/janet-cardiff-forty-part-motet.

[88] Bill Viola, interview in *Buddha Mind in Contemporary Art*, eds. Jacquelynn Baas and Mary Jane Jacob (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2004), 254. A Zendo is a meditation hall.

> seldom associated with amplitude. As such, silence also becomes a way of *participating* in a sacred setting or in the process of sacralisation.[89]

The Shadow Side

As a resident of Paul Jones's Theological World One my moment in the art gallery was one of *epiphania*—a moment such as Thomas Merton describes, when we "pass through the center of our souls and enter eternity."[90] There is no *epiphania*, however, without *obsessio*. Therefore, I will rewind the movie to another scene at the Art Gallery of Ontario which occurred a few minutes before the experience described above. I came upon another installation by Cardiff (and in this case, a collaboration with her partner, George Bures Miller), entitled "Opera for a Small Room."

> The room looks like a cross between a garden shed and a packing crate—it is a roughly-made structure, with a large central window and two side windows into which viewers can look, but no door. Inside the room is a huge collection of records, several record players and a bewildering number of antique speakers. . .
>
> The room performs a 20-minute opera, building up sound in layers until the entire room is throbbing, lights flashing in time with the rhythms. The sound is a collage of opera, rock music, a recording of a stage hypnotist from the 1970s, the sound of rain and a train, and the lonely musings of the opera-lover in his room [a gravelly voice]:"This place is falling apart. The animals are taking over. The weasels eat the mice and the squirrels. The mice are chewing on the wires in the walls. If they start on the records I'll have to poison them . . ."[91]

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[89] Stan Link, "Going Gently: Contemplating Silences and Cinematic Death," in *Silence, Music, Silent Music*, ed. Nicky Losseff and Jenny Doctor (Hampshire, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), 76. Italics in original.

[90] Jones, *Theological Worlds,* 115. Jones quotes Thomas Merton, *The True Solitude*, Kansas City: Hallmark, 1969, 19.

[91] Fiona Bradley, "Storytelling: Recent collaborative installations by Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller," in *Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller: The House Of Books Has No Windows, Volume I, Selected Works*, ed. Fiona Bradley (Edinburgh: The Fruitmarket Gallery, 2008), 16.

This is the *obsessio* of World One, where one feels separated from God, utterly alone. *The animals have taken over*. As I stood at the installation I had the following thought: *Janet Cardiff is my alter-ego*. I am grateful that the moment of *epiphania* ("The Forty Part Motet") came after the experience of *obsessio* experienced during "Opera for a Small Room." When *epiphania* occurs after *obsessio*, one is left with a residue of hope.

The Curator of Silences II

I am the Curator of Silences

Wandering the halls of art galleries

The Picasso Museum in Paris:

Where I sat, pierced through by the colours,

the gestures, the beautiful gestures

The Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam:

Vincent: another alter ego, sad, desperately sad

The Museum of Modern Art, New York:

Matisse: my bliss

Listen:

I want to escape

I'm tired of drudgery and sin

Mice, chewing the wires

I want to climb inside

a Mary Oliver Poem

a Bach concerto

To dance like the old man in the gallery

moving to the sound of God.

Temps vierge

I will rewind the movie one more time. As a doctoral student I am with my colleagues in the St. Stephen's College art studio for an integrative seminar. Having spent several days talking, listening, I feel 'talked out'. We have been asked to spend some time in silence. The silence is like medicine for me. We are like Trappist monks slowly moving about in quietude. It feels to me as though a profound respect pervades the room. There is nowhere else I want to be. Art meets silence. I am reminded of the words of Deborah Haynes: "Both art and life are nurtured by solitude, stillness, and silence. Therefore, seek silence. In the quiet of the studio and even amidst the noise of the street, we can kindle the imagination."[92] These brief yet profoundly beautiful moments of silence during our integrative seminar have continued to resonate for me. Punctuated with *point vierge*, this time/space of silence is akin to the state Thomas Merton referred to as "*temps vierge* [French, literally, 'virginal time']—not a blank to be filled or an untouched space to be conquered and violated, but a space which can enjoy its own potentialities and hopes—and its own presence to itself.[93] Temps Vierge is

[92] Deborah J. Haynes, *Art Lessons: Meditations on the Creative Life* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2003), 180.

[93] Thomas Merton, *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton* (New York: New Directions, 1973), 117. Italics are mine.

kairos time. As David Steindl-Rast reminds us, ". . . real living happens not in clock time (from the Greek *chronos*), but in what the Greeks called the *kairos*, time as opportunity or encounter."[94]

According to Buddhist tradition, one of the Buddha's disciples, Candrakirti, said: "The most noble of the truths is silence [the silence of the *mind*]."[95] As Gus Gordon writes,

> The silence that the Buddha offers is not only for the purpose of liberating us from the external din within and without, but also to calm us and to reconcile us with all the factors that displace us from our center of gravity. It is like a fasting of the mind that lets us taste everything as it really is once more. Silence turns out to be not only the absence of sound but a living, palpable presence in its own right, filled with boundless vitality . . . We could almost define the essence of an authentic human inner life by one word: silence. From this perspective it could further be asserted that there is nothing in the world that resembles God as much as silence. That is why we may dare to assert that silence is God.[96]

The first chapter of Susan Sontag's *Styles of Radical Will* is called, "The Aesthetics of Silence." Sontag writes: "Silence is the artist's ultimate other-worldly gesture: by silence, he frees himself from servile bondage to the world . . ."[97] I say, Amen. Like Sontag, I am one who "recognizes the imperative of silence, but goes on speaking anyway. Discovering that one has nothing to say, one seeks a way to say *that*."[98]

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[94] David Steindl-Rast, *The Music of Silence*, 5.

[95] Raimundo Pannikar, *The Silence of God: the Answer of the Buddha*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989), 167.

[96] Gus Gordon, *Solitude and Compassion: the Path to the Heart of the Gospel* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009), 164.

[97] Susan Sontag, *Styles of Radical Will*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969), 6.

[98] Ibid., 12.

A Desert Silence

As a resident of Theological World One I am a desert wanderer, a nomad, a *liminar*. As Jones states, those of us who live within this World are, "nameless, directionless, homeless, with *reality* simply the name for the incidental point where we happen to be . . . And yet, this mood that suggests atheism keeps being pierced by special moments—the remembrances, hints of new beauty."[99] It is within this context that I was delighted to discover other kindred spirits—other a/r/tographers. Alison Pryer writes: "As intellectual liminars, artist/researcher/teachers might learn much from the ways that other liminary peoples have prospered and flourished in the midst of their marginality."[100]

Like the ancient Desert Fathers and Mothers I am drawn to silence, to the desert *within*:

> The desert waits,
> ready for those who come,
> who are obedient to the Spirit's leading;
> or who are driven,
> because they will not come any other way.
>
> The desert always waits,
> ready to let us know who we are–
> the place of self discovery.

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[99] Jones, *Theological Worlds*, 110.

[100] Alison Pryer, "Living with/in Marginal Spaces: Intellectual Nomadism and Artist/Researcher/Teacher Praxis," in *A/r/tography: Rendering Self Through Arts-Based Living Inquiry*, eds. Rita L. Irwin and Alex de Cosson (Vancouver: Pacific Educational Press, 2004), 204.

> And whilst we fear, and rightly,
> the loneliness and emptiness and harshness,
> we forget the angels
> whom we cannot see for our blindness,
> but who come when God decides
> that we need their help;
> when we are ready
> for what they can give us.
>
> –Ruth Burgess[101]

The desert elders strived for holiness within the silence of the desert—the silence of the monastic cell. As David G. R. Keller writes, "The disciples [of Abba Pachomius, ca. 290-346 C.E.] learned that silence is not simply the absence of sound. It is a unique form of human consciousness."[102]

I am intrigued by Keller's notion of silence as a unique form of human consciousness. For several weeks, in preparation for this section of the dissertation, I have been contemplating the following question: What is the essence of silence? I have spent many hours *in* silence meditating *on* silence. This has been, in part, a heuristic process as developed by Clark Moustakas, specifically a period of what he calls *immersion* where, "the researcher lives the question in waking, sleeping, and even dream states. Everything in his or her life becomes crystallized around the

[101] In David G.R. Keller, *Oasis of Wisdom: the Worlds of the Desert Fathers and Mothers*, Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005), no page number.

[102] Ibid. 89.

question."[103] In fact, my immersion had reached such a level of intensity that I sometimes had trouble sleeping**;** I would lie awake thinking about silence.

The poet Edmund Jabes captures the essence of silence as "a unique form of consciousness" (Keller) and offers a way in to the experience of silence though deep immersion (Moustakas):

> You do not go into the desert to find identity but to lose it, to lose your personality, to become anonymous. You make yourself void. You *become* silence. It is very hard to live with silence. The real silence is death and this is terrible. It is very hard in the desert. You must become more silent than the silence around you. And then something extraordinary happens: you hear silence speak.[104]

Jabes's silence is what Max van Manen refers to as *ontological silence*: "[T]he silence of Being or Life itself. In ontological silence we meet the realization of our fundamental predicament of always returning to silence—even or perhaps especially after the most enlightening speech, reading or conversation."[105] We do not have enough ontological silence in our modern culture, and in our classrooms. I hunger for more of this silence in both my work and my personal life. As Pico Iyer writes, “The need for an empty space, a pause, is something we have all felt in our bones; it’s the rest in a piece

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[103] Clark Moustakas, *Heuristic Research: Design, Methodology, and Applications*, (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1990), 28.

[104] Quoted in David Jasper, *The Sacred Desert: Religion, Art, and Culture*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing), 2.

[105] Max Van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*, 2nd edition, (London, ON: The Althouse Press, 1997), 114.

of music that gives it resonance and shape."[106] This rest in a piece of music is an in-between space, a liminal space.

The spiritual life is filled with paradox. In the desert we thirst for water. At the oasis we long again for the endless horizon of the desert. Likewise, silence draws me to music and the music draws me back to silence. Jan Christiaens writes:

> If silence were to be understood as total absence of sound, there would be no possibility whatever to evocate silence in music. But silence is not just absence of sound, or emptiness. Besides this evident physico-acoustic definition, silence can also mean a certain quality in the mind of the listener, brought about by a specific acoustic atmosphere in the music. As such, silence stands for a definite kind of presence rather than absence.[107]

Christiaens is a philosopher of music; however, his description of silence as *presence* could also be read in theological terms: *Ein Engel fliegt durch das Zimmer*—the angel flying through the room. Furthermore, within the dynamics of Theological World One, when the silence of the desert is initially felt as negative (that is, separation from God, absence), there is nevertheless a foretaste of presence: "The cosmic abyss as tomb is a cauldron of inexhaustible fecundity. It is as if the ache characterized as separation whispers that one's nature is, in fact, to belong—to the heart of being."[108]

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[106] Pico Iyer, *The Art of Stillness: Adventures in Going Nowhere*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2014), 53.

[107] Jan Christiaens, "Sounding Silence, Moving Stillness: Olivier Messiaen's *Le banquet celeste*" in *Silence, Music, Silent Music*, eds. Nicky Losseff and Jenny Doctor (Hampshire, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), 57.

[108] Jones, *Theological Worlds*, 111.

I return now to an earlier frame: the Art Gallery of Ontario. Long after the initial experience, the Forty Part Motet continues to reverberate. I can still see the old man dancing. Is this image a reflection of *me*?—perhaps. After all, I long to dance, to move from the music back to the silence—to watch the faces of dreamers, worshippers, lovers. I have spent much of the last few weeks meditating on silence. However, it has become not so much a seeking of silence as it is a seeking *through* the silence—*the silence filled with music, filled with God.*

The Curator of Silences III

The Curator of Silences

Wonders where you go, dear reader

To find the silences within

Don't forget to hold them

gently.

Ontological silence, in theological terms, I name as a form of Grace. I have described it as the silence of the desert. The desert can be also be described on another level. The interior life must not be lived without connection to the wider world. We must go beyond the silence. When I first came upon the writings of Thomas Merton, many years ago, I read the following passage and immediately knew I had found a kindred spirit:

> What is my new desert? The name of it is *compassion*. There is no wilderness so terrible, so beautiful, so arid and so fruitful as the wilderness of compassion. It is the only desert that shall truly flourish like the lily. It shall become a pool, it shall

> bud forth and blossom and rejoice with joy. It is in the desert of compassion that the thirsty land turns into springs of water, that the poor possess all things.[109]

In the context of education, when we are present with our students, when we listen to them, when we find, together, this ontological silence, we are well placed to enter Merton's desert of compassion.

Call and Response

> "Out beyond ideas of right and wrongdoing there is a field,
>
> a singing field, I'll meet you there."[110]

Just as silence can be medicine, so too can music. As John O'Donohue suggests, "Music arises from the realm of simultaneity. It takes us to a level where time becomes a circle."[111] Music resonates—that is what sound does—and the listener responds: *call and response*. There is a *space* between the music and the listener; however, we are not usually aware of this space as it is seamless. Music and listener are one. A good musician is also one with the music. I think of someone like the cellist, Yo Yo Ma: his instrument becomes an extension of his body. An orchestra, a choir, a Jazz quartet (or any other group of musicians who are in sync) perform as one, and we respond—sometimes with tears, sometimes with delight. Wonderful examples of call and response can be found

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[109] Thomas Merton, *The Sign of Jonas*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1953), 334.

[110] Chloe Goodchild, *The Naked Voice: Transform Your Life through the Power of Sound* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books), 220. Goodchild has elaborated here on a poem from Rumi.

[111] O'Donohue, *Beauty*, 63.

within the various traditions of vocal chant. David Steindl-Rast describes the qualities of Gregorian chant:

> The rule of St. Benedict—the "trellis" (for rule is *canon* in Greek), the latticework that has supported Western monastic life for 1,500 years—reminds monks that they stand in the presence of angel choirs whenever they chant. And they sing like the angels, who are said to be calling one another, answering one another in never-ending praise. That is also an expression of spiritual life as a whole, which is, in its essence, a life of love, of listening and responding to God and to one another. Love is not a solo act.[112]

Indeed, *love is not a solo act*: communitas.[113]

The Colours—or Absence of Colour—of the Liminal Space

I have suggested that the liminal space holds music, and silence. Consider, if you will, whether it might also contain colour, or perhaps the absence of colour. Take white for example. Kenya Hara, in his text aptly entitled, *White*, states: "In the old days, Japanese referred to the latent possibilities that exist prior to an event taking place as *kizen*. Insofar as white contains the latent possibility of transforming into other colors, it can be seen as *kizen*."[114] Here, *kizen* and the liminal are synonymous, inhabiting time and space. For a painter, the white canvas functions as *tabula rasa*.

When I imagine the colours of the liminal space I immediately think of Mark Rothko and his huge canvases. The painter died in 1970. In 1971, the Rothko Chapel, housing fourteen of his paintings opened in Houston, Texas, and was dedicated as "a

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[112] Steindl-Rast, *The Music of Silence,* 6.

[113] At this juncture, it may not surprise my reader to discover that Gregorian chant is alive and well in Theological World One as it is, "the music of separation *seeking* reunion." Jones, *Theological Worlds*, 56. Italics in original.

[114] Kenya Hara, *White* (Lars Müller Publishers, 2010), 8.

sacred place open to all, every day."[115] Visitors to the Rothko Chapel have left comments such as, "A place not to think—to unthink" and "seldom have I felt more in the presence of God."[116] The chapel has hosted visitors—pilgrims perhaps—from around the world, including the likes of Nelson Mandela, Jimmy Carter, and the 14th Dalai Lama.

Numerous colloquia have been held at the Rothko Chapel, including one in 1981 entitled "Islam: A Spiritual Message and a Quest for Justice." At the opening of the colloquium, Dominique de Menil, one of the Chapel's patrons, remarked: "[Rothko's] dark monochrome paintings are like openings into the infinite. Their deep velvety blacks and purples do not stop the gaze. They seem to greet us with visual silence. They bring us onto the threshold of the unfathomable, the unfathomable mystery of the cosmos, the unfathomable mystery of God."[117]

Eclipse haiku (for Thay)

Pure, blue moon, blood moon

Inside the blue womb, floating

Waiting for the rain.

[115] Susan J. Barnes, *The Rothko Chapel: An Act of Faith* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989), 15.

[116] Ibid., 8.

[117] Dominique de Menil, *The Rothko Chapel: Writings on Art and the Threshold of the Divine* (New Haven and London: Yale University Presss), 2010), 49.

Like de Menil, I am a lover of abstract art. Although I agree with her when she says our world is cluttered with images, I disagree when she states unequivocally that "only abstract art can bring us to the threshold of the divine."[118] The Divine, like beauty, is in the eye/mind/heart of the beholder. At times, this beholding brings us to tears. An example: The following letter is from a book entitled, *Pictures and Tears: a history of people who have cried in front of paintings*. The letter is among more than four hundred others received by the book's author, art historian, James Elkins—and his favourite of the lot.

> Hello,
>
> I cried in a museum in front of a Gauguin painting—because somehow he had managed to paint a transparent pink dress. I could almost see the dress wafting in the hot breeze. I cried at the Louvre in front of Victory. She had no arms, but she was so tall. I cried (so hard I had to leave) at a little concert where a young man played solo cello Bach suites. It was in a weird little Methodist church and there were only about fifteen of us in the audience, the cellist alone on the stage. It was midday. I cried because (I guess) I was overcome with love. It was impossible for me to shake the sensation (mental/physical) that J.S. Bach was in the room with me, and I loved him. These three instances (and the others I am now recollecting) I think have something to do with loneliness . . . a kind of craving for the company of beauty. Others, I suppose, might say God. But this feels too simple a response.
>
> Robin Parks.[119]

More Questions about Angels

I would like to return now to the images of angels flying through rooms, calling

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[118] Ibid., 18-19.

[119] In James Elkins, *Pictures and Tears: a history of people who have cried in front of paintings* (New York and London: Routledge, 2001), 248.

to each other—these mysterious inhabitants of the liminal space. I recall the lines from the poem, "Questions About Angels" by Billy Collins:

> ". . . one female angel dancing alone in her stocking feet,
> a small jazz combo working in the background.
> She sways like a branch in the wind, her beautiful eyes closed . . ."[120]

I like this image of a solitary angel dancing in stocking feet. It reminds me of the 'smiling angels' outside the Cathedral of Reims, France. Let us, at least for the moment, stay with the idea of angels as friendly. Angels are the main characters in the 1987 black and white film, *Wings of Desire*.[121] The film depicts wingless angels listening and comforting the 'human' characters. When Wim Wenders conceptualized the film he wondered what angels look like, and what we look like to them.[122] Wenders writes:

> In the film, children can see the angels, while grown-ups don't. We told our little actors to look straight into the lens, as if the camera was somebody they liked very much. Some of them then smiled the sweetest smiles into the camera. The 'loving look' thus worked both ways, it was reciprocal, which only increased our responsibility and duty.
>
> [This] had the strangest effect on our crew and on the shooting climate. It was as

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[120] Billy Collins, *Questions About Angels: Poems* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press), 26.

[121] *Wings of Desire*, directed by Wim Wenders, DVD (Criterion Collection, 2009).

[122] Wim Wenders and Mary Zournazi, *Inventing Peace: a Dialogue in Perception* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2013), 73.

> if the angels we had called upon and evoked with our story indeed showed up and offered their help. (I couldn't help thinking they actually did.) Ours became the gentlest movie set ever.[123]

The potent metaphor of the angel serves as the starting point of conversations ("mailversations") between Wenders and Zournazi in their book, *Inventing Peace*.[124] They ask: "If peace is being *with* the world and others, how might we consider this 'withness' as an empirical question and a tool for change?"[125] Moreover, they ask: "What are the ethical and moral consequences of looking but not seeing? We consider this question as one of the most fundamental questions of our times."[126] These questions lie at the heart of this dissertation: if we wish to *be peace* we must go beyond simply looking and *see.* Perhaps the angels are sending us a message, calling us to see. After all, etymologically, *angel* means messenger. The pedagogical question then becomes, what is our response?

Not all angels, of course, dance in stocking feet, nor are they smiling. There is, for example, Walter Benjamin's 'angel of history':

> This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before

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[123] Ibid., 74. On occasion I screen scenes from *Wings of Desire* in my classes to illustrate liminal space. The angels in the movie sit in compassionate presence with the 'humans'.

[124] Ibid., 17.

[125] Ibid., 70. Italics in original.

[126] Ibid., 5.

him grows skyward. The storm is what we call progress.[127]

I would *like to make whole what has been smashed.* I aim to develop a pedagogy of peace; when we foster presence and compassion in the classroom we have a chance to sow the seeds of peace for our students. As one student, Laura Closson, says, "My major is peace studies. How will I ever be able to negotiate peace among nations if I am not at peace within myself?"[128] I am a son of refugees; my parents fled the Soviet invasion of Latvia during the Second World War and came to Canada. As a son of refugees, a citizen of the world, a father, grandfather, and educator, I am called to remember our history. It is this remembrance that fuels my desire for peace.

Touchstone: Auschwitz. Elie Wiesel's memoir of the Holocaust, *Night*, has haunted me for years. Weisel worked tirelessly for the sake of peace. In his 1986 Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, he said the following:

> I remember: it happened yesterday, or eternities ago. A young Jewish boy discovered the Kingdom of Night. I remember his bewilderment, I remember his anguish. It all happened so fast. The ghetto. The deportation. The sealed cattle car. The fiery altar upon which the history of our people and the future of mankind were meant to be sacrificed . . . And now the boy is turning to me. "Tell me," he asks, "What have you done with my future, what have you done with your life?" And I tell him that I have tried. That I have tried to keep the memory alive, that I have tried to fight those who would forget. Because if we forget, we are guilty, we are accomplices.[129]

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[127] Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Harcourt, Brace &World, 1968), 259-260.

[128] Quoted in Fran Grace, "Meditation in the Classroom: What do students say they learn?" in *Meditation in the Classroom: Contemplative Pedagogy for Religious Studies*, eds. Judith Simmer-Brown & Fran Grace (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2011). 237.

[129] The text of this speech is appended to Elie Wiesel, *Night*, trans. Marion Wiesel (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006), 94-95.

I do not wish to be an accomplice; and so I vow to remember.

Dear Father Louis,

I am writing you from outside the Reina Sofia Museum in Madrid, Spain. A friend brought me here. We have just seen Picasso's masterpiece, *Guernica*. We stood transfixed there for a very long time in tacit agreement that the only appropriate response to such a work is silence. Yet, now I feel compelled to speak out. Guernica reminded me of Benjamin's angel of history. Carolyn Forché—perhaps the bleakest poet of our time—entitled her long poem, "The Angel of History", and included lines such as,

"They died and were buried in mud but their hands protruded. So their friends used the hands to hang their helmets on."[130]

And,

"Anna said we were all to be sent: Poles, Romanians, Gypsies. So she drew her finger across her throat."[131]

Father, we have a responsibility. We cannot pretend we did not know. We're heading back to Barcelona next and I will write you from there.

Peace,

Norbert.

[130] Carolyn Forché, *The Angel of History* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 12.

[131] Ibid., 25.

August, 24, 2017

Dear Father Louis,

We are back in Barcelona where we paid our respects to the fallen at Las Ramblas. We had walked along that very avenue only a few days before the killings. Here are the existential questions: Are we abandoned? Are there any angels left?

Norbert.

P.S. "The language and sensibility of peace has yet to be invented."[132]

Leaving Las Ramblas

My question, asked just now, of whether we are abandoned, came from a state of theological *obsessio*. As I stood in the crowd of mourners at Las Ramblas I felt as though I was staring at yet more 'wreckage' at the Angel of History's feet. I felt tinges of despair, and anger. Yet, when I return to moments of *epiphania*, I think I can answer my second question: I believe there still are some angels left. They are hiding of course—that is what angels are wont to do. Perhaps one of our pedagogical tasks at hand is to look at ways to draw these angels out. After all, *educare* means to *draw out*, does it not?

In this chapter I have explored, in broad terms, some of the qualities—the colours, sounds, and silences—of the liminal space. I will now turn, specifically, to more of its pedagogical implications. How can we, as educators, find more ways to 'invent' peace? One way, I suggest, will be to honour the classroom as sanctuary.

[132] Wenders and Zournazi, *Inventing Peace*, 2.

Chapter 3

Classroom as Sanctuary

Sanctuary

In this place

we are called to bow,

remove our sandals

Sacred Beauty moves

in this place

the Numinous Silence

Sound, Touch

you are welcome here

you are invited

to take refuge

and rest

may you remember

the blue womb

and rediscover

your true self

First, a Bowl of Tea

"With a bowl of tea, peace can truly spread."[133]

As a way to facilitate the classroom as a place/space of sanctuary I would like to offer the Japanese *Chado*, or Way of Tea, as a guiding motif. As I described earlier, the key values of the Way of Tea are harmony, respect, purity, and tranquility. These values inform the aesthetics of the traditional tea-room as well as the ritual of the tea ceremony.

As a starting point I will draw upon the writings of Soshitsu Sen, the 15th Grand Master of the Ursenke School of Tea: "['Harmony'] reflects both the evanescence of all things and the unchanging in the changing . . .The principle of harmony means to be free of pretensions, walking the path of moderation . . . and never forgetting the attitude of humility."[134] Respect, he writes, "is the sincerity of heart that liberates us for an open relationship with the immediate environment, our fellow human beings, and nature, while recognizing the innate dignity of each."[135] Purity, "through the simple act of cleaning [the tea-room] . . . involves, "such actions as clearing the dust from the room and dead leaves from the garden path [which] all represent clearing the 'dust of the

[133] Soshitsu Sen XV, *Tea Life, Tea Mind* (New York: Weatherhill, 1985), 9.

[134] Ibid. 13.

[135] Ibid.

world', or the worldly attachments, from one's heart and mind."[136] Tranquility, Soshitsu Sen states, is achieved after practicing the first three values in daily life, alone and with others. "That we can find a lasting tranquility within our own selves in the company of others is the paradox."[137]

The following is an abridged description of the traditional Japanese tea ceremony:

> An unpainted, weathered gate, slightly ajar, is a guest's first sign of welcome to a tea gathering. Water has been sprinkled about, an indication of the host's readiness for his guests . . .
>
> After being silently greeted by the host, the assembled guests one by one proceed along the path toward the tea hut. Near its entrance is a low stone basin; each guest stoops to rinse his hands and mouth in a symbolic act of purification. The guests proceed to the tea hut and enter by crawling through a small doorway.
>
> Before the guests arrive, the host has hung a scroll in the alcove of the tea hut. Often the calligraphy of a Zen priest or tea master, it helps create mood for the gathering . . .
>
> Upon entering, each guest appreciates the scroll, the fire, the arranged ash, the kettle, and any other utensils that might be displayed. The subdued light and the gentle tones of mud walls and aging natural wood create an atmosphere conducive to contemplation. The guests quietly wait for their host to appear. The host opens the sliding door panel, welcomes each guest, returns to the preparation room, and begins serving a small meal . . .

[136] Ibid., 14.

[137] Ibid.

> The host puts a measured amount of powdered tea into the bowl, adds some hot water, blends the tea with the tea whisk, adds a bit more water, blends it again, and gives it to the first guest. In the stillness wafts the fragrance of the tea. All the guests share this one bowl of thick dark green tea.[138]

Harmony

The classic text, *The Book of Tea,* describes the tea-room as a "sanctuary."[139] The Way of Tea teaches us that in order to achieve harmony in the sanctuary we must observe humility. Humility and peace go hand in hand. In the days of the Samurai, for instance, those who entered the tea-room were required to leave their swords outside: "the tea-room being preeminently the house of peace."[140] In my classrooms, I encourage lively discussion, even debate; however, I also ask students to respond to each other with humility and kindness—to leave their 'swords' outside. This goes hand in hand with the Buddhist notion of non-attachment to views—even *Buddhist* views. Beginner's Mind is a mind of humility. This creates an atmosphere of harmony, and in turn, one of peace. As Jackie Seidel writes, "Pedagogy imagined as sanctuary might be characterized by the active and ethical creation of sacred space. Pedagogy imagined as sanctuary calls for the courageous resistance of ways of living, being together, and

[138] Ibid., 27-29.

[139] Okakura Kakuzo, *The Book of Tea* (Rutland, VT & Tokyo, Japan: Charles E. Tuttle, 1987), 62.

[140] Ibid.

educating that engage in or promote social, ecological, cultural, and economic violence."[141]

I believe Seidel's "active and ethical creation of sacred space" is the task at hand for contemplative education. Parker Palmer offers the following challenge:

> When I think about the reforms needed if higher education is to serve our students and our world faithfully and well, I think there should be a litmus test for every project that claims to strengthen the mission of our colleges and universities. Does this proposal deepen our capacity to educate students in a way that supports the inseparable causes of truth, love, and justice? If the answer is no, we should take a pass and redouble our efforts to find a proposal that does.[142]

Harmony, evanescence, changing, unchanging

Musical notes, changing, unchanging

Voices in harmony, changing, unchanging

Many voices, one voice, the one sacred sound, changing, unchanging.

Respect

From the atmosphere of harmony springs respect. We have all, from time to time, felt the humiliation of disrespect. In a classroom this can be especially hurtful—whether it be when one student disrespects another (often in its extreme form of

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[141] Seidel, "Meditations on Contemplative Pedagogy as Sanctuary", 142.

[142] Parker Palmer, Foreword, in Daniel P. Barbezat and Mirabai Bush*, Contemplative Practices in Higher Education: Powerful Methods to Transform Teaching and Learning* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2014), vii.

bullying), or when a teacher disrespects a student. I felt disrespected by one of my teachers on my first day of high school. As a result, I felt vulnerable and became fearful of the teacher; moreover, this one brief experience coloured my perspective on the school itself. As educators we should be mindful of the potential vulnerability of our students. What we say, how we say it, and sometimes even the way we look at a student, can have significant repercussions. If the best thing we can do for our students is to offer them our presence, perhaps the worst thing would be to show them disrespect.

I would like to think we can take respect a step further: that is, to *trust*. Further, deeper, still: to *love*. Jean Vanier writes: "To love someone is not first of all to do things for them, but to reveal to them their beauty and value, to say to them through our attitude: 'You are beautiful. You are important. I trust you. You can trust yourself.'"[143] To *reveal to them* is to draw out—*educare*.

The classroom as sanctuary is a place of compassion. When we respect our students' beauty, we also respect their fragility, their vulnerability. When we nurture compassion in our classrooms, we can expect—and hope for—a trickle-down effect:

> Educating about and for compassion connects young people to others and their communities, asking and supporting them to develop empathic, caring and altruistic responses to others on the basis of common humanity. Compassion provides a disposition vital for living and working with others. In this way,

[143] Jean Vanier, *From Brokenness to Community* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1992), 16.

> developing compassion can help young people to make a positive contribution to their schools and communities.[144]

This trickle-down/out to the wider world is captured by the practice of loving-kindness meditation:

> Loving-kindness, or *metta*, as it is called in the Pali language, is unconditional, inclusive love, a love with wisdom. It has no conditions; it does not depend on whether one "deserves it or not" . . . it is not restricted to friends and family; it extends out from personal categories to include all living beings. There are no expectations of anything in return.[145]

By practicing *metta* we bring others into our inner sanctuary. Loving-kindness meditation is rooted in the Buddhist tradition; however, it can easily be practiced in a multi-faith or even secular setting. I often lead my students in a loving-kindness meditation, which I have adapted as follows:

May I be well and happy.

May my friends and family be well and happy.

May my colleagues be well and happy.

May all those with whom I have difficulty be well and happy.

May all living beings be well and happy.

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[144] Andrew Peterson, *Compassion and education: cultivating compassionate children, schools and communities* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 157.

[145] http://www.contemplativemind.org/practices/tree/loving-kindness, accessed December 5, 2017. "Based on a teaching by Steven Smith."

May you, dear reader, be well and happy.

Purity

Horst Hammitzsh writes: "Purity is an outer and inner cleanliness . . ."[146] There are many dead leaves on the garden path. The path, of course, is the mind and heart. One way to an outer and inner cleanliness is through mindfulness meditation. Judith Simmer-Brown and Fran Grace state: "Students certify that meditation benefits them keenly, both in their academic work and as a lifelong skill. Their learning assessments through the years have confirmed over and over again that meditation refines the mind and hones the heart. As a teaching method we know it works."[147] Here are some examples of the efficacy of meditation in a classroom setting. Louis Komjathy—who calls himself a "Daoist Professor"—teaches a "Contemplative Traditions" course. One of his students commented: "I never knew how confused and chaotic my mind was. I'm completely distracted. I have no attention span. How can anyone learn like this?"[148] A journal entry from another of Komjathy's students reads: "Meditation is helping me calm down and relax . . . In class, I can concentrate and be fully present."[149] Anecdotally, I can testify to hearing similar comments from many of my students.

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[146] Horst Hammitzsch, *Zen in the Art of the Tea Ceremony*, trans. Peter Lemesurier (Wiltshire, Great Britain: Element Books, 1979), 70.

[147] Judith Simmer-Brown and Fran Grace, Introduction to *Meditation in the Classroom,* xi.

[148] Louis Komjathy, "Field Notes from a Daoist Professor," in *Meditation in the Classroom*, 102.

[149] Ibid.

Gatha for Raking Leaves:

Breathing in, I rake the leaves.

Breathing out, I smile.[150]

Tranquility

With the practices of harmony, respect, and purity, we arrive at the tranquility of the sanctuary—a collective tranquility. When practiced in a group setting such as a classroom there is, as Thich Nhat Hanh has often said, a *collective energy* of mindfulness. Here we have a sanctuary inhabited by people with a common interest, not only in 'book learning'—but in *being peace*, together. Hammitzsch writes:

> I had many Japanese friends who were followers of the Tea Way—followers not merely in the sense of mastery of its forms, but in a much deeper sense. They were truly in search of the ultimate, the most profound. For them the Tea Ceremony was no aesthetic amusement, not just a training in etiquette. They were *chajin*, tea-people to the very core.[151]

As *chajin* we move from separation to reunion. This is the spiritual intimacy of the sanctuary—and the classroom. Here we inter-are with one another.

Practicing Hospitality

The principles of harmony, respect, purity, and tranquility were identified by

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[150] A "gatha" (Sanskrit) is a short verse used in meditation. The practitioner repeats the words over and again to heighten awareness. I have borrowed the form here from Thich Nhat Hanh; many of his verses involve breathing, and, well, smiling!

[151] Hammitzsch, 20.

Sen Rikyu (1522-91). Rikyu also laid out what has come to be known as the 'Seven Rules of Tea': "Make a delicious bowl of tea; lay the charcoal so that it heats the water; arrange the flowers as they are in the field; in summer suggest coolness, in winter, warmth; do everything ahead of time; prepare for rain; and give those with whom you find yourself every consideration."[152]

As Soshitsu Sen points out, these rules, handed down through the centuries, at first glance may seem mundane. However, they "[define] the attitude of one who practices [the Way of Tea] . . . [and as] with most truths, the simpler the words, the stronger and more straightforward they are, and the more forcefully they strike our hearts."[153] Viewed in this light, the Seven Rules of Tea—metaphorically and practically—can serve as a pedagogical guide. For example, when we offer our students "every consideration" we engender the kind of hospitality often missing in our educational institutions. Moreover, we offer our presence. When we "do everything ahead of time" we show respect—a sign, perhaps subtle, that we are *taking care* of the sanctuary. When we are "prepared for rain" we are open to surprise; this allows for an atmosphere of spontaneity.

According to Parker Palmer, "A learning space has three major characteristics, three essential dimensions: openness, boundaries, and an air of hospitality."[154]

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[152] Soshitsu Sen XV, *Tea Life, Tea Mind*, 30-31.

[153] Ibid., 31.

[154] Parker Palmer, *To Know As We Are Known: Education as a Spiritual Journey* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993), 71.

Openness involves clearing—like our garden path—of dead leaves. As teachers, this is about "resisting our own tendency to clutter up our consciousness and our classrooms."[155] This clutter, Palmer suggests, may include our projections and pretensions.[156] Projections are not worthy of an authentic sanctuary; pretensions are contrary to the notion of beginner's mind. Some of the best teachers I know have about them an air of humility. A humble teacher is an approachable teacher. When a student asks a question, a humble teacher is not afraid to answer with, "I don't know."

Palmer's second characteristic, the need for boundaries, suggests a cautionary tale. "A learning space cannot go on forever; if it did, it would not be a structure for learning but an invitation to confusion and chaos."[157] Likewise, it is important for teachers to keep healthy boundaries between them and their students. When we are too close, the space loses its liminal quality; rather, it becomes confining and potentially intimidating. A boundary in this sense can be physical (as in "you're in my space"), as well as psychological: students should take care not to idealize a teacher. When that occurs there is a danger of the teacher becoming the guru, and the student, the disciple. There are more than enough stories of teachers exploiting their power over students. In short, there is safety in boundaries. A classroom environment that does not feel safe is no longer a sanctuary. As Palmer suggests, "Hospitality means receiving each other, our struggles, our newborn ideas with openness and care."[158]

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[155] Ibid.

[156] Ibid.

[157] Ibid., 72.

[158] Ibid., 73-74. Regarding the concept of hospitality Palmer acknowledges his debt—as I do—to Henri Nouwen, *Reaching Out: the Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (New York, Doubleday, 1975).

For the Catholic writer, Henri Nouwen, hospitality is a matter of vocation.[159] Hospitality is one of Nouwen's three "movements" of the spiritual life.[160] He emphasizes the need to welcome the stranger. You never know who you might meet on the road. This notion of hospitality has biblical roots: "When the two travellers to Emmaus invited the stranger, who had joined them on the road to stay with them for the night, he made himself known in the breaking of the bread as their Lord and Saviour (Luke 24:13-35)."[161]

With the inherent power differential between teacher and student, rarely are they seen as equals, as co-learners. For example, I recall again my first day of high school; my sense of powerlessness lasted well throughout the rest of that year. Teaching, Nouwen writes, "asks for a mutual trust in which those who teach and those who want to learn can become present to each other, not as opponents, but as those who share in the same struggle and search for the same truth."[162] The classroom as sanctuary requires an air of authenticity. It cannot be manufactured, only nurtured. "[W]e cannot force anyone to such a personal and intimate change of heart, but we can offer the space where such a change can take place."[163]

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[159] Nouwen, 66.

[160] Nouwen's first movement is "from loneliness to solitude"; the second is "from hostility to hospitality"; the third, "from illusion to prayer."

[161] Ibid., 66-67.

[162] Ibid., 85-86.

[163] Ibid., 77.

I am drawn to two other words related to hospitality: *hospital*, *hospice*. These are liminal places. They can be places of profound healing—physical, emotional, spiritual, and existential. I will now consider the possibility that even our classrooms can be places of healing.

The Whole World is Medicine: What is the Illness?

Dear Father Louis,

I thought of you today when I came upon Paul Gauguin's 1889 painting, *Christ in the Garden of Olives*.[164] The Garden of Olives—Gethsemani—is a liminal place.[165]

I could not turn my eyes away from Gauguin's painting. Of course, I have heard the gospel stories of the 'agony in the garden' many times, when Jesus—realizing that his death was imminent—sweated drops of blood. However, as I gazed at *Christ in the Garden of Olives*—especially the deep shades of blue—it struck me that perhaps there was more to this story than the agony of an impending death. I wondered if Jesus cried for the soul of the world. He had come to save it, yet it remained broken—as it is today.

Father, please tell me: if the whole world is medicine, what is the illness?

Peace, Norbert.

The Buddha's First Noble Truth is that life is suffering. The role of the healer is to help alleviate suffering. From Henri Nouwen's Christian perspective we are all called to

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[164] Gauguin's painting is housed in the Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach, Florida. http://www.norton.org/europeanart. Accessed, December 10, 2017.

[165] The Garden of Olives is also called the Garden of Gethsemani. Merton lived in the Abbey of Gethsemani, in Kentucky.

be healers.[166] This resonates with the Jewish practice of 'healing the world', *Tikkun Olam*. Brenda Shoshanna writes: "The Torah teaches that not only do we have to fix (balance) ourselves, but ultimately it is our responsibility to fix and heal the entire world."[167] Indeed, as this work is a *doctoral* dissertation, the word healer carries with it special significance. Here I explore the question: how are we as educators—as doctors of ministry—to carry out this vocation of healing? Perhaps the first thing we need to do is learn to listen, compassionately. Compassionate listening is presence. Nouwen, again, takes an egalitarian view: "As healers we have to receive the story of our fellow human beings with a compassionate heart, a heart that does not judge or condemn but recognizes how the stranger's story connects with our own."[168]

Compassionate listening is what Thich Nhat Hanh refers to as *deep listening*. This involves setting an intention: "Deep listening has only one purpose: to help others suffer less . . . Listening deeply and compassionately, you begin to understand the other person more fully, and love is nourished. The foundation of love is understanding, and that means first of all understanding suffering."[169] Compassionate, deep listening is medicine for the one who suffers.

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[166] Nouwen, 93.

[167] Brenda Shoshanna, *Jewish Dharma: a Guide to the Practice of Judaism and Zen* (Philadelphia: Da Capo Press, 2008), 249-50.

[168] Nouwen, 96.

[169] Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Art of Communicating* (New York: Harper Collins, 2013), 44-46.

Deep listening requires an embodied presence. As Louis Komjathy suggests, listening involves "internal silence and stillness . . . abiding in a state of open receptivity."[170] Komjathy quotes the classic Daoist text, *Zhuangzi*: "Make your aspirations one. Don't listen with your ears; listen with your heart-mind. No, don't listen with your heart-mind; listen with your *qi*. Listening stops with the ears, the heart mind stops with recognition, but *qi* is empty and waits on all things."[171] In order for healing to occur there must be an environment of safety. Komjathy's *open receptivity* creates a space between the teacher and student—in what I would call a container of safety.

A safe classroom cannot be manufactured at will. It would be folly for a teacher to simply announce to her/his students that their classroom is a place of safety and then assume they will feel safe. Safety involves trust, and trust can only be intuited. Our task, then, is to develop, as best we can, what Katherine Schultz has called a *pedagogy of trust,* where listening is essential: "Our challenge is to change the discourse about teachers, teaching and learning, replacing distrust with a pedagogy of trust. Only then will we see deep engaged teaching and successful learning in our classrooms."[172]

Within this container of safety we also need to listen to the silence between the words—to be present within this liminal space, a space often rich with meaning. As Anne Hill suggests, "Pedagogical presence is listening, with a silent understanding, to the

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[170] Komjathy, 99.

[171] Ibid., 98. *Qi*, a variation of *chi*, is life force or energy.

[172] Katherine Schultz, "Listening in a Pedagogy of Trust," in *Listening to Teach: Beyond Didactic Pedagogy*, ed. Leonard J. Waks (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2015), 163-164.

meaning outside the words."[173] How often, in conversations, do we feel the need to fill brief moments of silence with unnecessary words? I have heard it said that only true friends are comfortable with moments of silence during conversations. Perhaps there is some truth to that; however, I would like to think our classrooms, and our conversations, can also be 'comfort zones', where silence can serve to refresh and heal. This would involve what Leonard J. Waks refers to as, "silent apophatic listening—taking in the other and his or her utterances and silences and allowing them to fill the listener's psyche."[174]

The Curator of Silences IV

You don't have to speak, rest for a moment.

The Curator of Silences knows you have suffered.

I can see it in your eyes, your gestures.

Rest. Take refuge.

This is your sanctuary.

Another word for listening would be *witnessing*. Too often we aim to 'fix' or 'save' those we encounter. Best intentions aside, I have found that such an approach can backfire: those we attempt to fix or save may end up feeling smothered as a result.

[173] Hill, 104.

[174] Leonard J. Waks, Introduction to *Listening to Teach: Beyond Didactic Pedagogy*, ed. Leonard J. Waks (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2015), 7.

To witness, however, is not to fix or to save.[175] It is simply, and profoundly, to *be with* the other, to be present. In our classrooms, then, we may wish to develop a *pedagogy of witnessing.*[176]

Pamela Meyer writes: "For many adults, learning environments—especially those that are intended to create space for transformation where sharing personal experiences and questioning perspectives are encouraged—are the most vulnerable places in which they could find themselves."[177] St. Stephen's College, where I teach, is an example of such an environment. In many classes students are encouraged to share their life stories. Often, these are stories filled with joy—and sorrow. Occasionally, students are reduced to tears as they share their inner struggles. I ask students to bear witness to their colleagues' struggles with care; sometimes the most helpful response to an emotionally charged story is not to comment but simply to offer a gesture of respectful silence.

Deep listening and loving speech go hand in hand. Both are intended to alleviate suffering and promote peace.[178] Thich Nhat Hanh writes:

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[175] Brenda Shoshanna, quoted earlier in the context of *Tikkun Olam*, referred to fixing as balancing. Here, I am using the word fix in its pejorative sense: a human being is not a broken machine to be fixed, rather, a person to be healed.

[176] I was curious to see whether my phrase, "pedagogy of witnessing "was already present in the literature. I soon discovered Roger I. Simon's, *A Pedagogy of Witnessing: Curatorial Practice and the Pursuit of Social Justice* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2014). Simon's cultural studies text looks at the disturbing state of race relations in the United States through two exhibitions entitled, "Without: Lynching Photography in America." I noted that my study focuses on the classroom as sanctuary, while the photographic exhibitions consider the reality of those *without* sanctuary. I also noted that Simon refers to curatorial practice as the pursuit of social justice—similarly, mine aims at *being peace.*

[177] Pamela Meyer, "Learning Space/Work Space: Can We Make Room for Transformative Learning in Organizations?" in *Innovations in Transformative Learning: Space, Culture, & the Arts*, eds. Beth Fisher-Yoshida, Kathy Dee Geller, and Steven A. Shapiro (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2009), 50.

[178] As I described in the last chapter, the Fourth Mindfulness Training is "Deep Listening and Loving Speech." In the Buddhist tradition, loving speech is also known as "right speech." Thich Nhat Hanh has made this subtle—but I think poignant—change in the nomenclature. Nhat Hanh, *The Art of Communicating*, 51.

> The one who speaks has to be very mindful, using words in a way that can help the listener not be caught in wrong perceptions. And the listener has to be careful not to be caught in the words being said or the ideas being offered. There needs to be mindfulness and skillfulness on the part of both the speaker and the listener.[179]

Of course, the opposite of loving speech, or right speech, is wrong speech. Nhat Hanh reminds us of the danger of using words that are unkind and hurtful as these can cause suffering.[180] Wrong speech can also be found in more subtle ways: for example, when we use sarcasm or condescension in our tone of voice. Even our body language can be harmful. It might not be the norm for teachers to direct explicitly harmful words at their students; however, a sarcastic or condescending tone alone can carry weight, and cause suffering. This also applies to the way students interact with each other; it would be helpful to name our classrooms 'no sarcasm/no condescension zones'.

Deep listening and loving speech can be seen in the context of 'call and response'. If our students' internal struggles, sadness, trauma, worries, fears—in short, their suffering—is the call, what is our response? There is a liminal space/time between the words spoken and the response. Do we take the time needed to listen and respond with kindness? If we do, in my view we are offering them sanctuary.

A Lighter Tone

I think a lighter tone regarding the liminal space is overdue. Let us see what Aislinn Hunter has to say:

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[179] Ibid. 50.

[180] Ibid., 51.

Pardon me. Can you direct me to Betweenity?

Yes. It's here.

Here?

Yes here. And there.

You're not pointing in any direction.

You need a direction, then? Somewhere specific?

Yes.

Fine. Go past the carriage track. Left at the sign to "Withins.'

Then on for a few miles, to where it's gusting.[181]

We need to make more room for play in the sanctuary of the classroom. Laughter— that is, true laughter from the heart—needs a safe place to live. *Happy teachers will change the world*—as will happy students. Bridgit Cook, a New York school librarian, says as teachers we are merely "vehicles" to help create this happiness.[182] By play, I am referring here to 'deep' play, childlike, rather than *childish*—play that heals. Stephen Nachmanovitch writes: "There is an old Sanskrit word, *lila*, which means play. Richer than our word, it means divine play, the play of creation, destruction, and re-

[181] Aislinn Hunter, *A Peepshow with Views of the Interior: Paratexts* (Kingsville, ON: Palimpsest Press, 2009), 8-9. Hunter acknowledges the "Bronte lexicon" for the word, "betweenity."

[182] In the documentary, "Happy Teachers Will Change the World." Wouter Verhoeven, filmmaker, Plum Village website: https://wakeupschools.org, accessed December 17, 2017.

creation, the folding and unfolding of the cosmos. *Lila*, free and deep, is both the delight and enjoyment of this moment, and the play of God. It also means love."[183]

A/r/tography is a means of play:

> *Graphology Commentary*. This doctoral candidate is energetic and friendly but has a sombre quality about him. He seems by nature to live more in the obsessio than the epiphania. He shies away from the dance floor, yet loves to sing. His biggest regret is not becoming an astronaut, which may have something to do with his fascination with angels. He needs to slow down, recognizing that the phrase *physician heal thyself* is directed at him. More medicine for this candidate is recommended. [184]

Although the word play implies activity of some kind, it can also be a means for rest. Diane Ackerman refers to play as "a refuge . . . a sanctuary of the mind."[185] Deep play exists in *kairos* time. While laughter and joy—*lila*—has its place, deep play can also contain a more thoughtful dynamic. As Hans-Georg Gadamer points out, play "contains its own, even sacred, seriousness."[186] Play can be a form of contemplation. When we

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[183] Stephen Nachmanovich, *Free Play: Improvisation in Life and Art* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam, 1990), 1.

[184] My dear reader will, I hope, forgive me: I thought I would have some fun here with the idea of graphology (handwriting analysis). I am borrowing the form here from a series of "graphology notes" I discovered in Jacqueline Albert Simon and Lucy D. Rosenfeld, *A Century of Artists' Letters: Notes to Family, Friends, & Dealers: Delacroix to Léger* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing, 2004).

[185] Diane Ackerman, *Deep Play* (New York: Random House, 1999), 6.

[186] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 102.

are at play we are fully present with whatever and/or whomever we are playing *with*. Play can be a form of communication with the other—or *beyond* communication, as in Thomas Merton's *communion* and Victor Turner's *communitas*.

When we employ beginner's mind play has the capacity to fill us with a sense of wonder. The experience of wonder, maintains Robert C. Fuller, is one of the defining aspects of spirituality.[187] I liken play to Fuller's description of meditation and mystical practices, which "temporarily deactivate a person's accustomed way of experiencing the world. As a result, experience appears novel, fresh, unaccustomed. This alteration in our accustomed ways of making sense of the world introduces the element of surprise—the triggering mechanism for the emotions of curiosity and wonder."[188] Indeed, curiosity and wonder are essential ingredients for a vibrant learning environment.

Play involves an embodied presence. Keeping in mind the necessary boundaries referred to earlier, and in the appropriate context, teachers should feel free to play *along with* their students—to *dance* with them.[189] The rhythm of the 'to and fro' of dance is akin to the notion of 'call and response'. When we play/dance with our students we allow ourselves to be vulnerable. We model beginner's mind. Hill writes: We must be prepared to see, to hear, to listen, to speak, to touch and be touched, to know the empty, open spaces. We cannot do so with our heads alone; we must be

[187] Robert C. Fuller, *Wonder: From Emotion to Spirituality* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 1.

[188] Ibid., 131.

[189] Hill, 109. Hill refers here to Gadamer's notion of play as dance, 'to and fro', as in the origin of the German word *spiel*, to dance.

embodied, present with all of our senses. We must come with, and to our senses. Perhaps in these ways, we will become *real* teachers."[190] To play is to be alive. To be alive is a gift.

I want both of us

To start talking about this great love

As if you, I, and the Sun were all married

And living in a tiny room . . .

As if you, I, and God were all married

And living in

A tiny

Room.

—Hafiz [191]

The True Self

What was your original face before your parents were born?

—Zen koan

[190] Ibid., 109. Italics in original. Although Hill's text is directed primarily at teachers of children, in my view the importance of pedagogical presence—pedagogical *dance,* if I may—is equally appropriate in the context of adult education.

[191] Hafiz, *The Gift*, trans. Daniel Ladinsky (New York: Penguin, 1999), 180.

At the beginning of this chapter I suggested the classroom as sanctuary is the place where we can recover our true self. Thomas Merton writes of the true self and the 'false self' from a theological perspective:

> For me to be a saint means to be myself. Therefore, the problem of sanctity and salvation is in fact the problem of finding out who I am and of discovering my true self . . . We are at liberty to be real, or to be unreal. We may be true or false, the choice is ours. We may wear now one mask and now another, and never, if we so desire, appear with our own true face . . . Our vocation is not simply to *be*, but to work together with God in the creation of our own life, our own identity, our own destiny.[192]

The classroom as sanctuary is a space where students are encouraged to remove their 'masks'—to live authentically. They are not required to accept Merton's—or anyone else's—idea of the true self. They have the freedom to decide how best to imagine their true self—their original face. The role of the teacher is not to impose an ideology or theology but to open the door of the sanctuary and welcome the student in.

In this chapter I began with the metaphor of the tea-room as a way to consider the classroom as a sanctuary, a refuge. Here, the teacher is not master, but host. In the sanctuary we are free to play, to pray, to learn, to be ourselves—and if possible to find healing. In the next chapter I will go deeper into the sanctuary to explore further the creative possibilities of play through art making as a contemplative practice.

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[192] Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (New York: New Directions, 1962), 31-32.

Chapter 4

The *Temenos* and the *Koan*: Art Making as Contemplative Practice

> "From the very nature of the inner conditions of creativity it is clear that they cannot be forced, but must be permitted to emerge."
>
> —Carl Rogers.[193]

Trusting the Process

We have moved, it seems to me, a long way from the original meaning of *educare*—to draw out. I do not mean to generalize: there are, of course, many creative endeavours being nurtured in our schools. Nevertheless, the "banking" concept of education is still prevalent in many quarters. In 1970, Paulo Friere described education as, "an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat.[194] In her "reinvention" of Friere's work, Antonio Darder writes: "Teachers, besieged by the politics of expediency and the standardization of knowledge, feel little freedom to

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[193] Carl Rogers, *On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy* (Cambridge, MA: The Riverdale Press, 1961), 356.

[194] Paulo Friere, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed: 30th Anniversary Edition*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 2002), 72.

practice the flexibility to permit the learning process to emerge organically with students."[195]

The *temenos* runs counter to the banking model.[196] In the studio, students as artists are exploring their questions—exploring the *process* more than worrying about the final product. This involves *trusting the process*. As Shawn Mcniff writes, "Whenever I find myself in a difficult situation, the principle is reaffirmed. Actually, the more hopeless my problem seems, the more I learn to trust the process."[197] In the intermodal/expressive arts field there is a commonly used phrase: "low skill, high sensitivity."[198] This approach to art making, with a focus on process is similar to mindfulness meditation; if we are thinking about the future—the attainment of enlightenment, for example—we are not living in the present moment. Likewise, as artists if our main focus is on the final product—the painting, the dance, the poem—we may miss the joy of simply being present with what we are doing.

The low skill, high sensitivity approach can be particularly effective for students who do not consider themselves 'artists'. When we invite students to trust their

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[195] Antonio Darder, *Reinventing Paulo Friere: a Pedagogy of Love* (Cambridge, MA: Westview Press, 2002), 123-24.

[196] I am using Shawn McNiff's sense of temenos, as quoted earlier: "a sacred place that acts as a vessel of transformation."

[197] McNiff, Shawn. *Trust the Process: An Artist's Guide To Letting Go* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1998), 13. I have also tried to remember the importance of trusting the process while writing this dissertation. Deborah J. Haynes is helpful in this regard: "Write to find out what you think." Haynes, *Art Lessons*, 24.

[198] Paulo Knill, Helen Nienhaus Barba, and Margo N. Fuchs, *Minstrels of Soul: Intermodal Expressive Therapy* (Toronto: EGS Press, 2004), 150.

sensitivity rather than their skill, it allows for a freedom of expression. As Knill, Barba, and Fuchs write,

> Many of us have been taught that the quality of art lies in the perfection of manual skills that enable us to expertly mold, modulate, change, build and handle art materials. As we investigate the arts of various cultures, however, we find that often what touches us most in art is not virtuosity, but rather something that we might call *competency of expression*. This is not to imply, of course, that virtuosity cannot be beautiful.[199]

Working with students in the art studio I have often observed how—ironically perhaps—they are pleased with the final product, even though a polished work of art was not the objective. Working with clay, for example, I have seen some students proudly take their finished work home, while others are happy to squish their 'sculptures' and return the material to the studio. I view this 'release' of material as akin to the meditative practice of 'letting go' aspects of our conditioned thinking. In a common form of mindfulness meditation, one focuses on the breath, observing the thoughts that arise, gently releasing each thought, and returning one's attention to the breath. Letting go of a lump of clay—or an unhealthy thought, for that matter—can be a liberating experience.

I would like to point out another similarity here between mindfulness meditation and low-skill, high sensitivity art making. When we meditate we are encouraged to do so non-judgmentally. I encourage my students/artists to approach their work in the same manner. Herbert Eberhart and Sally Atkins write:

> In the arts withholding judgment can be particularly challenging because of our cultural and personal tendencies to judge both ourselves and our art. This tendency toward judgment is often reflected in statements such as, "I can't draw," "I can't sing or dance," or "I am not creative." Such negative self-judgments often are the result of early wounding around arts experiences, such

[199] Ibid. Italics in original.

> as being told not to sing, but to mouth the words in a school chorus, or being told by a teacher that a picture wasn't drawn correctly.[200]

Eberhart and Atkins's word, *wounding* is a powerful one. The sanctuary of the classroom/art studio is no place to inflict wounds on our students; on the contrary, it is, as I discussed in the previous chapter, a place for healing. I am not suggesting here that teachers should take on the role of therapists. Again, I am mindful of Parker Palmer's notion of boundaries; teachers must be aware of the professional and ethical differences between their role and that of a therapist. Nevertheless, there are similarities between the therapeutic process and the pedagogical—particularly in the context of the art studio. Knill, Barba, and Fuchs stress the importance of process: "In viewing therapy as an *artistic* process, we find that *the process itself* (not the process-*ing*) offers by far the most significant therapeutic value. Often healing occurs metaphorically, minimizing the need for any verbal processing at all."[201] Treated with care, then, the temenos—with a focus on process—holds great potential for healing.

Curating the Garden

> Within each of us is a secret garden: a place where our true self exists. It may be a garden of roses with many thorns, or a garden of exuberant wildflowers. It probably includes moldy and rotten tree stumps and some poisonous mushrooms. Whatever grows in the garden, it is all part of being human. It is all material that can be used in the creative process.[202]

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[200] Herbert Eberhart and Sally Atkins, *Presence and Process in Expressive Arts Work: at the Edge of Wonder* (London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2014), 45-46.

[201] Knill, Barba, and Fuchs, 140.

[202] Natalie Rogers, *The Creative Connection: Expressive Arts as Healing* (Palo Alto, CA: Science and Behavior Books, 1993), 11.

Natalie Rogers offers her secret garden to us in the context of expressive arts therapy. Her garden metaphor is also appropriate in a pedagogical context: students come to the temenos with their "exuberant wildflowers" and their "moldy and rotten tree stumps." As any good gardener will tell you, a garden needs water, rich soil, sunlight, and *space* to breathe. As teachers, our responsibility is to nurture such a space, allowing creativity and healing to flourish. Here again is Hans Obrist's notion of curating, quoted earlier, as "cultivating, growing, pruning and trying to help people and their shared contexts to thrive."

The teacher as curate takes a person-centered approach with her/his students. This correlates with a philosophy embraced by many expressive arts therapists. Natalie Rogers writes:

> The person-centered aspect of expressive arts therapy describes the basic philosophy underlying my work. The *client-centered* or *person centered* approach developed by my father, Carl Rogers, emphasizes the therapist's role as being empathic, open, honest, congruent, and caring as she listens in depth and facilitates the growth of an individual or a group. This philosophy incorporates the belief that each individual has worth, dignity, and the capacity for self-destruction. Carl Rogers' philosophy is based on a trust in an inherent impulse toward growth in every individual.[203]

As I stated earlier, the classroom as sanctuary is a place of safety. In the art studio we witness each other's work, without judgment. The temenos is not a place to analyze the work of our peers; analysis is often perceived as coming from a place of judgment. Shawn McNiff writes: "We witness and receive the expressions of others and

[203] Ibid., 3.

open to what the images have to say. It is this process of making art together and then bearing witness to the arrivals in a sacred way that furthers the healing qualities of the studio environment."[204] The role of the facilitator is to create the space, and invite transformation/healing to occur organically. McNiff states: "When we are truly present with one another and open to whatever needs to be expressed, this pervasive sense of safety and even sacredness can emerge. This is the most fundamental quality of the healing studio."[205]

When students/artists work together in harmony we experience a dynamic Mcniff refers to as the *participation mystique*: "[a time when we] are in sync with our surroundings . . . when the 'chemistry' is right. Everything fits. The process carries us as we work together with it."[206] I have experienced this many times, both as a facilitator and participant in the studio.

Within the participation mystique we find what Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi has called *flow* experiences:

> The metaphor of 'flow' is one that many people have used to describe the sense of effortless action they feel in moments that stand out as the best in their lives. Athletes refer to it as 'being in the zone,' religious mystics as being in 'ecstasy,' artists and musicians as aesthetic rapture. Athletes, mystics, and artists do very different things when they reach flow, yet their descriptions are remarkably similar.[207]

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[204] McNiff*, Art Heals,* 23.

[205] Ibid., 29.

[206] Mcniff, *Trust the Process*, 20.

[207] Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Finding Flow: The Psychology of Engagement with Everyday Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 29.

An Erotic Energy

The expressive arts studio is often a quiet place, where we—like monastics—are 'alone, together'. A subtle energy pervades the space. However, when we move from one modality to another—for example, from painting to drumming, singing, or dancing—the studio can also be a wild place. Here, the participation mystique is highly charged; the liminal space is infused with an erotic energy.

> ". . . the way we long to be
> that happy in the heaven of earth
> that wild, that loving."
> —Mary Oliver.[208]

Once again, in the studio we find the dynamic of play. According to Natalie Rogers we play in order to "recapture that sense of freedom and abandon we had as a child: the curiosity, inquisitiveness, and urge to explore what was once ours. As you play and create, your self-consciousness about being the creator dissolves."[209]

An erotic, wild energy can be a spiritual energy. While there are many definitions of spirituality, particularly in the context of 'flow' I agree with Ronald Rolheiser:

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[208] From the poem, "Luke." Mary Oliver, *Red Bird: Poems*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2008), 3.

[209] Rogers, *The Creative Connection*, 27.

> Spirituality is about what we do with the fire inside of us, about how we channel our eros. And how we do channel it, the disciplines and habits we choose to live by, will either lead to a greater integration or disintegration within our bodies, minds, and souls, and to a greater integration or disintegration in the way we relate to God, others, and the cosmic world."[210]

The temenos is a place to channel this energy, especially for those needing refuge—who feel 'exiled' from their own bodies. Diarmuid O'Murchu writes: "Our sense of exile . . . is our sense of being out of tune with the Earth, and the clay of our own bodies . . ."[211]

The phrase, "clay of our own bodies" is a vivid reminder of how, for much of my life, I have been "out of tune" with my body. My discovery of the expressive arts studio, several years ago, has enabled me to return to my body. In this context, I identify with the following comment from O'Murchu: "Estrangement from the human body is a universal experience, augmented in large measure by the influence of formal religion itself. Disconnection from the body, more than anything else, characterizes our cultural experience as a species in exile."[212] Even more to the point, O'Murchu makes the following statement: "Spirituality, as distinct from religion, does not have a problem with the body – and neither should theology."[213]

An embodied theology is ultimately a sensual one. In another of his books, *The Transformation of Desire,* O'Murchu writes: "eros is desire for union, for connection, for

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[210] Ronald Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality,* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 11.

[211] Diarmuid O'Murchu, *Religion in Exile: A Spiritual Homecoming*, (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2000), 59.

[19] Ibid., 155.

[213] Ibid., 168.

relationship."[214] This is not only a theological statement. O'Murchu links this to the realm of quantum physics:

> Erotic energy is free but not random. It moves in the direction of relationality. It seeks to connect and in the connections begets new possibilities. We evidence this in the subatomic world of quarks and leptons. They make no sense in isolation. In laboratory conditions they always manifest in twos or threes. Patterns of three also predominate in the galactic and planetary spheres.[215]

To be free is to be wild, alive. Joseph Campbell writes, "People say that what we're all seeking is a meaning for life. I don't think that's what we're really seeking. I think what we are seeking is an experience of being alive, so that our life experiences on the purely physical plane will have resonances within our innermost being and reality, so that we actually feel the rapture of being alive."[216] If we are able to facilitate a classroom environment where our students feel the *rapture of being alive* we can truly say we have achieved *educare*.

This notion of aliveness, of wildness, is frequently missing from our adult classrooms. Like Parker Palmer, I "struggle with those parts of our spiritual tradition in which the energies of active life are more feared than revered, pictured as wild horses to be brought under control rather than life-giving streams that flow from the source."[217] The great Christian mystic, Meister Eckhart, once contemplated wild horses, only in a slightly different theological context:

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[214] Diarmuid O'Murchu, *The Transformation of Desire: how desire became corrupted – and how we can reclaim it* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2007), 67.

[215] Ibid.

[216] Joseph Campbell, with Bill Moyers, *The Power of Myth* (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 3.

[217] Ibid., 7.

> In this likeness or identity God takes such delight that he pours his whole nature and being into it. His pleasure is as great, to take a simile, as that of a horse, let loose over a green heath, where the ground is level and smooth, to gallop as a horse will, as fast as he can over the greensward–for this is a horse's pleasure and nature. It is so with God. It is his pleasure and rapture to discover identity, because he can always put his whole nature into it–for he is this identity itself.[218]

Thomas Merton calls Eckhart's analogy of a wild horse, "a marvelous image which is distinctly Western and yet has a deeply Zen-like quality about it. This divine likeness in us which is the core of our being and is 'in God' even more than it is 'in us,' is the focus of God's inexhaustible creative delight."[219]

One cannot put one's "whole nature" into something, without it seems to me, the fullness of desire. As O'Murchu writes, "At the heart of all desiring is a yearning for beauty."[220] In the next chapter I will explore further the place of beauty in the classroom. Meanwhile, I would like to turn to the connections between creativity and the Zen koan.

An Archive of Longings

> "A message enclosed in an envelope, a poem inscribed upon it and prepared for sending over miles or years is not a bit or byte of information but an archive of longings. *Even when I hold your letter in my hands, I am not touching you.*"[221]

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[218] Quoted in Thomas Merton, *Zen and the Birds of Appetite* (New York: New Directions Books, 1968), 11. Merton uses Raymond Blakney's translation of Meister Eckhart.

[219] Ibid.

[220] O'Murchu, *The Transformation of Desire*, 65.

[221] Marta Werner, "Itineraries of Escape: Emily Dickinson's Envelope-Poems" in Dickinson, Werner, Bervin, *The Gorgeous Nothings,* 212. Italics in original.

Dear Father Louis,

I'd like to pass on what appears to be a rhetorical question posed by Walter Benjamin as I think it has something to do with my methodology: "But when shall we actually write books like catalogues?"[222]

My dissertation may be nothing more, and nothing less, than a catalogue. However, rather than a catalogue, I prefer Marta Werner's word: an archive—an archive of longings. Maybe we're all longing for the same things: beauty, love, peace, the presence of the Holy.

Norbert.

In my view, the Zen koan–and the desire to create art—are both expressions of a kind of longing, a longing for truth. The expressive arts studio/classroom is not a place to provide answers; rather, it is there to help students explore their questions. Likewise, the koan is not a clever trick meant to confuse the student of Zen. Instead, it serves as an entry point for exploration. This exploration may—or may not, depending on the perspective of the student—take the form of theological reflection. The koan is meant to engage us outside of the rational mind. It is, "a kind of spoof on the human intellect."[223]

[222] Walter Benjamin, *Walter Benjamin's Archive*, *Images Texts, Signs*, eds. Ursula Marx, Gudrun Schwarz, Michael Schwarz, and Erdmut Wizisla (London: Verso, 2007), 1.

[223] Heinrich Dumoulin, "The Song Period: a Time of Maturation," in *Sitting with Koans: Essential Writings on Zen Koan Introspection*, ed. John Daido Loori (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2006), 28.

In a sense, the central question in this dissertation—What are the qualities of the liminal space?—serves as a koan. The statement by Robert Aitken, quoted in my first chapter, is worth repeating here: " . . . the student who elects to pursue the path of Zen Buddhism gives up history and philosophy as basic tools and takes up the way of poetry. The way of poetry is the way of staring at the word or words with only the question, 'What is it?' occupying the mind. "The koan is a vehicle used by the student of Zen to attain enlightenment. John Daido Loori writes: "In order to see into a koan we must go beyond the words and ideas that describe reality and directly and intimately experience reality itself. The answer to a koan is not a fixed piece of information. It is one's own intimate and direct experience of the universe and its infinite facets. It is a state of consciousness."[224]

At the centre of koan introspection, according to Loori, lies what is known as the three pillars of Zen: "great doubt, great faith, and great determination . . . Great doubt is the question of life and death . . . described by the Chinese master Wumen as a red-hot fiery ball that's stuck in your throat. You can't swallow it and you can't spit it out . . . Great faith is the sincere trust in the process . . ."[225] As for great determination, Loori writes, "You keep practicing until the intellect is completely exhausted and you make

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[224] Loori, "Introduction: The Anatomy of the Zen Koan," 1. Loori also notes: "Because of the nature of Zen training and its emphasis on direct experience, a book about koan practice is, in a way, a contradiction in terms." Ibid., 5. I must acknowledge the same apparent contradiction in the writing of this dissertation.

[225] Ibid., 2-3. I see a parallel here between the 'pillar of great faith' and McNiff's trust of the process.

the quantum leap necessary to see the koan."[226] In traditional koan introspection, the student meditates on the question under the direction of a Zen master. The conventional method is called *zazen*: sitting meditation. There have been hundreds of koans used throughout the Zen tradition.[227]

While the koan is a "spoof on the human intellect", nevertheless, it should I would hope, be taken seriously. As Loori writes, "[N]o matter how many hundreds of koans we pass through, if they do not change the way we relate to the rest of the world, then they are nothing but meaningless intellectual exercises. We must *realize* these koans, and we must actualize them in everything that we do. That is the only way we will truly transform our lives."[228]

While practice and "great determination" is required for koan introspection, this does not in the end need to involve hardship. Instead, the practice becomes effortless. This is similar to the Taoist notion of 'effortless effort' or 'action of no-action (Chinese: *wu-wei*). Consider for example a concert violinist who has worked for countless hours to achieve virtuosity; to the untrained observer it looks easy. As Heinrich Dumoulin writes, "Only when the attentive mind is relaxed, free from purpose and ego, and fully devoted to the task can it open up of itself."[229]

I return here to beginner's mind and the tabula rasa. Displayed visually—and

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[226] Ibid., 3.

[227] Ibid. 3-4.

[228] Loori, "Dogen and Koans," in *Sitting with Koans*, 162. Italics in original. Loori is elaborating here on the 11th century teachings of the Japanese Zen Master, Eihei Dogen. In addition, I note Loori's phrase, "pass through"; as we meditate on the koan we *pass through* the threshold—the liminal space.

[229] Heinrich Dumoulin, "The Song Period: a Time of Maturation," 29.

metaphorically—here is a *tiny* tabula rasa:

The painter, Willem de Kooning once said:

> "Content . . . is a glimpse of something, an encounter, you know, like a flash—it's very tiny, very tiny, content."[230]

Beginner's mind is what David Chadwick calls the *Eastern* tabula rasa. Commenting on the teachings of Shunryu Suzuki, Chadwick writes: "Limitless and ready for anything, this Eastern tabula rasa is not, however, a blank starting point, it *is* the point. This is the 'mind of purity open to things as they are' . . . as [Suzuki] sometimes said."[231] We explore the Zen koan with beginner's mind in order to discover our essential nature—our true self.

> "At the still point of the turning world . . . there the dance is . . . Except for the point, the still point, there would be

[230] Willem de Kooning. The Willem de Kooning Foundation, "Content is a Glimpse" http://www.dekooning.org/documentation/words/content-is-a-glimpse, accessed January, 7, 2018. de Kooning was a contemporary of Mark Rothko.

[231] David Chadwick, Afterword in Suzuki, *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, 143. Italics in original.

> no dance, and there is only the dance."
>
> —T.S. Eliot, "Burnt Norton."[232]

Conceptualized further, beginner's mind is found in stillness—at the still point. John Daido Loori states:

> The still point is at the heart of the creative process. In Zen, we access it through zazen. The still point is like the eye of a hurricane. Still, calm, even in the midst of chaos. It is not, as many believe, a void to retreat into, shutting out the world. To be still means to empty yourself from the incessant flow of thoughts and create a state of consciousness that is open and receptive.[233]

To be open and receptive is to allow for uncertainty. However, as John Danvers points out, we are usually not very good at dealing with uncertainty.[234] Uncertainty creates tension. Nevertheless, as Danvers suggests, "To get the most out of artworks (and maybe out of life) we have to try to be nimble-footed, non-attached to fixed positions . . . We have to find ways in which to embrace uncertainty and complexity, and to be able to play with many meanings and multiple interpretations."[235] In my opinion, sensitive teachers should look for ways to gently encourage their students to accept

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[232] T.S. Eliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays: 1909-1950* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1971), 119.

[233] John Daido Loori, *The Zen of Creativity: Cultivating Your Artistic Life* (New York: Random House, 2004), 52. Likewise, the temenos is "not a void to retreat into."

[234] John Danvers, *Agents of Uncertainty: Mysticism, Scepticism, Buddhism, Art and Poetry* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2012), 168. I would suggest that students in the studio who do not consider themselves 'artists' are especially uncomfortable with uncertainty.

[235] Ibid., 169-70.

uncertainty in the studio environment.

> "The creative process, like a spiritual journey, is intuitive, non-linear, and experiential. It points us toward our essential nature, which is a reflection of the boundless creativity of the universe."[236]

Bringing the Koan to the Temenos

In my studio/classroom I often bring art making and the koan together in a facilitated process. In September, 2009, as part of my Master's thesis research, I facilitated a weekend expressive arts workshop with ten participants. The project was a heuristic/arts-based project, rooted in phenomenology. My central research question was: "What is the lived experience of beauty in the expressive arts studio?" This research formed the basis for my subsequent work in other classrooms and workshops. I am interested in how the koan can stimulate aesthetic responses from the participants. In this next section of the dissertation I will revisit some aspects of the original Master's thesis in the context of my present topic.

The workshop was designed as a spiritual retreat over a weekend. In one of the sessions I asked participants to contemplate the classical Zen koan: What was your original face before your parents were born? They used various media to explore the

[236] Loori, *The Zen of Creativity*, 1.

koan, including painting, sculpture and collage. At a later date I interviewed several of the participants, using pseudonyms.

One of the responses came from Lela. Initially she was "not the least bit interested" in the koan.[237] Laughing, she recalled, "I thought, good question, [but I am not] going to go there!" However, she then experienced a shift: "and then it was the most important thing of the whole weekend for me."[238] In response to the koan, Lela created a collage:

> I was not aware when doing the collage, of doing a collage on that question. I was just doing a collage in response to the day, which I enjoyed making. And then when I came in the next morning, and I was looking at [the collage] I realized that one way of looking at the collage was that it was a response to that question. And as soon as I did that then I wrote a poem and the poem felt true, deeply true, and therefore I felt just incredibly peaceful because it felt like it was a process that had unfolded quite lightly - so there was a kind of playful unexpectedness to it that came from just letting it go, and not feeling like I had to answer the koan.
>
> I think koans will never offer insight until you invite the rational mind to take a holiday. And so my rational mind said I'm not going to go there and then that was when an answer or an insight appeared. That's what I love about the expressive arts in relation to matters of spirit as well as matters of understanding [the] self - that it is a way to turn off the answers that you think you know in order to let in the answers that you know from a different place.[239]
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> The poem Lela wrote was entitled, "Before":

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[237] Krumins, "The Brilliance of Beauty", 54.

[238] Ibid.

[239] Ibid.

The face before I was born is burnished
like an ancient vessel unearthed after a long burial.
It is illuminated with the light that dances
off the edge of an ocean wave at dawn.
The skin is soft as the cheek of a sleeping child,
etched with the lines of an old woman at prayer.
In the eyes, the compassion of a mother embracing her weeping child.
And around the mouth, the strength of a warrior.
In the face before I was born, I see a profound knowing
about the new life that nestles in the cradle of death.
A willingness to leap into the deep mystery that beckons.
And above all, in the face before I was born,
I see exquisite tenderness.[240]

I later requested a description of the collage and whether Lela had any follow-up comments to offer. Her response (via e-mail) follows:

> The collage marries images of child, mother, and crone. It contains the warmth of sun on water and images of containers - a burnished pot, a rock cairn, and two nests. There is also a stylized warrior figure at the bottom. During the weekend, I recognized in these images elements of "the face before" and was delighted to thread them into a poem. It was satisfying and felt like it offered interesting insights into the essence of who I am. I then put the collage away and didn't revisit it for about four months. When I pulled it out again, I discovered that some of the images in the collage were showing up in subtle and fascinating ways in my current creative efforts.
>
> I wonder now: Did the collage prompt the direction that my creative work took in the months that followed? (And if the collage is "the face before", this feels like divine guidance). Or did the collage offer a glimpse into the future of my work that was just being conceived but had not yet been born? I don't know the

[240] Ibid., 54-55.

> answer, but when I look at the collage now it reminds me of the power of a weekend like that to allow us to tap into the deep. And then if we hold the experience lightly without dissecting it, the weekend continues to guide us long after it is over. Now that I've rediscovered the collage, it's on my bulletin board - offering nourishment and insight whenever my eyes are drawn there.[241]

During our initial interview, Lela and I also discussed the spiritual nature of the retreat. I noticed how she focused on the importance of paying attention:

> Now this is difficult because I would actually have a hard time identifying very much of anything that wasn't at one level about Spirit. My personal experience of Spirit is, the more we pay attention, the more likely we are to see it everywhere. So that would be a strong underpinning to how I experience the world. That being said, a weekend like that is an opportunity to pay attention, to have a heightened awareness, a more delicate awareness, a more subtle experiencing of consciousness of the Spirit than we might have if we were rushing from here to the grocery store, to do the dishes, to go out to the meeting. In a weekend like that, what we're doing is slowing it down, which is to me, a really important part of the process.[242]

During one of the other sessions in the retreat I posed another question to participants—formed as metaphor—which also functions as a Zen koan. The question was: If your hands could speak, what would they say? This koan came to me in a moment of inspiration and I trusted my instincts as a facilitator to offer it to the group.

I introduced the koan in one of the creative exercises involving clay work, with a guided meditation paraphrased from memory as follows:

> Take a moment to contemplate your hands. Gaze at your palms, your fingers. The beauty in your hands. Consider the many things your hands have done in your life—the many *good* things your hands have done. Look at how strong your hands have been—and how gentle. Remember all that your hands have held: perhaps a child, a loved one. Think too, of

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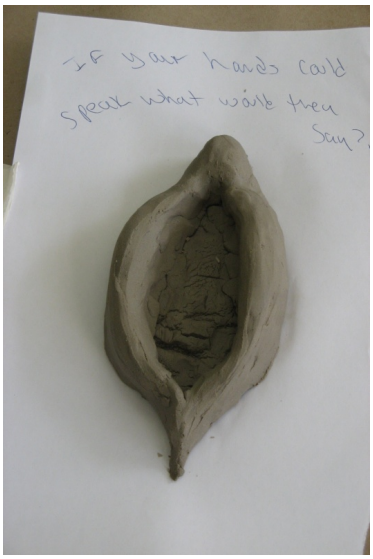
[241] Ibid., 55.

[242] Ibid., 56.

> how your hands are connected to your ancestors. Imagine how your ancestors' hands have been imprinted on your hands. In a moment, we will work with clay. To guide your work in the studio, I invite you to ask yourself the following question: If my hands could speak, what would they say?[243]

The participants then worked with the clay in silence. During a subsequent interview, a participant whom I named Emma, made the following comment:

> As soon as you [Norbert] asked the question [if your hands could speak, what would they say?], I had a real visceral response to that, I felt the presence of tears, and I wrote, "You are not alone, I can hold you, you are not alone, I can hold you," and I just kept repeating that. And at first it was like I was saying it to myself and then it felt like my mom, my dad, my ancestors, and then something far bigger than us as humans was saying "you're not alone, I can hold you," and this is a place I can rest.[244]



Clay and paper installation by Emma[245]

Another participant, Anna, after working with the clay was inspired to write a

[243] Ibid., 41-42.

[244] Ibid., 59.

[245] Ibid.

poem entitled, "Ode to my Hands." The following is an excerpt:

> Push, fold, mold,
> The power of my
> hands
>
> Knead, knead, the
> staff of life
> support
> comfort
> love my hands
>
> Such need to move
> and feel the clay
> under my hands
>
> the need to really
> connect
> such power in
> kneading
> making
>
> I love my hands
> always have![246]

I have offered these examples from my Master's thesis to illustrate the potential for this kind of art making as contemplative practice— what I would call *aesthetic koan introspection.* Although the above statements from Emma and Anna were not couched in explicitly theological language, several other comments related to their experience in the retreat were. For example, Anna called her art making a "portal"—a way in—to her

[246] Ibid., 51.

relationship with God.[247] Now, years later as I again recall Anna's use of the word portal I cannot help but smile; a portal is a doorway, at the threshold—a liminal space.

During this earlier research I had not considered the liminal space as a specific phenomenon; my focus was on the nature of beauty as a theological concept. However, in hindsight I now recall how liminality was indeed an energy which pervaded much of the retreat. I therefore offer one final example from the thesis as it relates specifically to the space *between participants.*

I set up a portable labyrinth during the retreat.[248] I invited participants to walk it alone or with a partner if they wished. Two participants, Joshua and Sophia, walked the labyrinth and then returned to the studio where they created a sculpture together with clay.

Joshua described walking the labyrinth with Sophia: "It was very beautiful because part of it was solitary but part of it [was that] we walked together - there was a very strong connection with her."[249] Joshua then described creating the sculpture with Sophia:

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[247] Ibid., 53.

[248] A labyrinth differs from a maze - it has no dead ends or tricks. It has one circuitous path which leads to the centre and then back out again. Lauren Artress writes: "The Labyrinth is a spiritual tool that has many applications in various settings. It reduces stress, quiets the mind and opens the heart. It is a walking meditation, a path of prayer, and a blue-print where psyche meets Spirit." https://www.veriditas.org, accessed January 10, 2018. I have since used the labyrinth in a number classes and workshops. I invite students to walk the labyrinth in silence, then move to the studio and create an aesthetic response to their experience.

[249] Krumins, "The Brilliance of Beauty", 48.

> It was wonderfully playful working with [Sophia]. It often felt like we were in school, like she was a little school girl and I was a little school boy [laughs] . . . [While] playing with [the] material—it often felt like each of the little forms I made were a gift for her—and the other way around. It was a very strong experience for me of me being a man and she being a woman and how that came into form in our work. I was, in a way, often providing a base for her on which she would then create something very playful . . . We were building a garden. It just happened. It just unfolded . . . There was definitely beauty in that.[250]

Sophia also recalled the experience of creating the sculpture with Joshua: "We were immersed in the clay work together . . . We were complementing each other . . . it felt natural, and as [Joshua] said it was very yin/yang, very balanced."[251]

In this chapter I explored the potential for developing contemplative practices in the art studio as temenos—a liminal space for creativity, spirituality, and healing. By connecting a Zen sensibility with art making I introduced what I called aesthetic koan introspection. Whenever artists make a gesture toward the truth as they see it, they are responding to the koan: if my hands could speak, what would they say? Whenever they contemplate their original face before their parents were born they are in touch with their deepest humanity, their true self. I turn now to the need for teachers to embody *their* original face—to allow *their* hands to speak. I will start with identifying that need within myself.

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[250] Ibid. 48-49.

[251] Ibid., 49.

Chapter 5

The Contemplative Educator: Embodying the Practice

> "There is no effective way to teach contemplative practices without practicing them yourself."[252]

Transforming Our Own Suffering

We must attend to our own suffering before we can take care of our students. This point was emphasized time and again by participants at the retreat for teachers which I attended in 2013: if we want to teach mindfulness to our students we must embody the practice. This is the central message in the text that followed the retreat entitled, *Happy Teachers Change the World*.[253] During the retreat Thich Nhat Hanh said:

> For a teacher the first thing to do is to go home to himself or herself. The way out is in. Go back to oneself and take care of oneself: learning how to generate a feeling of joy, learning how to generate a feeling of happiness, learning how to handle a painful feeling or emotion, listening to the suffering to allow understanding and compassion to be born, and suffer less. This is the first step.[254]

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[252] Barbezat and Bush*, Contemplative Practices in Higher Education*, 67.

[253] Thich Nhat Hanh and Katherine Weare, *Happy Teachers Change the World* (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 2017), 195.

[254] Ibid.

This first step of mindfulness is one of self care. When we practice self care we are better able to handle the stress in our personal and professional lives; in a word, we become more resilient. The need to deal with the problem of burnout in the helping professions, including teaching, is well known. I note the growing interest among helping professionals in Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction training (MBSR). The internationally recognized program was developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn and his colleagues at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. For example, the University of Alberta's Faculty of Nursing is embarking on a program to train its instructors in MBSR. These instructors will, in turn, teach mindfulness practices to their nursing students.[255]

Until My Soul Assents

> "Look deeper, I counsel self. Follow your bliss and if there is something there, it will surface. Look deeper with intent . . . I must experience that which I intend to teach."[256]

While it is important for educators to practice self care, it is equally essential for them to practice self *awareness*. I return to here to the wisdom of Parker Palmer's statement that we teach who we are. I bring Palmer's message to my students and I do

[255] Personal communication (e-mail February 8, 2018), Dr. Sandra Davidson, Associate Dean, Undergraduate Programs, University of Alberta, Faculty of Nursing.

[256] Anami J. Naths, "Of Mango Trees and Woven Tales, in *A/r/tography: Rendering Self Through Arts-based Living Inquiry*, eds. Rita L. Irwin and Alex de Cosson (Vancouver: Pacific Educational Press, 2004), 121-123.

my best to embody it myself. In my view, teaching as a vocation should be a self-reflective practice. Palmer writes:

> Encounters with mentors and subjects can awaken a sense of self and yield clues to who we are. But the call to teach does not come from external encounters alone—no outward teacher or teaching will have much affect until my soul assents. Any authentic call ultimately comes from the voice of the *teacher within*, the voice that invites me to honor the nature of my true self.[257]

As I explained in my introductory chapter, this dissertation is not a self-study. However, I believe, like Rilke, that we must "live the questions."[258] To disassociate our true selves from our role as teachers is to wear a mask in front of our students. When we ask them, for example, to consider their original face, we are disingenuous if we are not willing to do the same. An authentic teacher must first be an authentic person. As Carl Leggo writes, in the context of a/r/tography, "We need to write personally because we live personally, and our personal living is always braided with our other ways of living—professional, academic, administrative, artistic, social, and political."[259]

Authentic writing—that is, writing from the heart, and authentic teaching—teaching from the heart—are both about bringing the richness of our lived experiences

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[257] Palmer, *The Courage to Teach*, 30. Italics in original.

[258] Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*, trans. Stephen Mitchell (New York: Vintage Books, 1984), 34.

[259] Carl Leggo, "Autobiography: Researching our Lives and Living our Research," in *A/r/tography: Rendering Self Through Arts-based Living Inquiry*, eds. Rita L. Irwin and Alex de Cosson (Vancouver: Pacific Educational Press, 2004), 5.

to the surface. In this way, we model authenticity for our students. As Cole and Knowles write, "Teaching is an autobiographical act. To teach is to construct an autobiographical account, to develop a living text . . . In order to teach, one must know oneself—first and foremost. It is, perhaps, impossible to effectively teach others without first knowing oneself."[260] With the importance of autobiography in mind, in this next section I offer these further glimpses into my life.

Dear Father Louis,

I'll be turning sixty next week. I decided it was time to ask myself the same question/koan I've been asking my students: If my hands could speak what would they say? I sat for a moment and gazed at the lines on my hands—mirroring the many lines on my face. The title for a poem came to mind: "On Turning Sixty". Then I recalled the poem by Billy Collins—beautiful and somewhat sad: "On Turning Ten".[261]

Here then is my aesthetic response to Billy's poem. I offer it to you as a gift. This is a 'call and response' poem. Billy's words are the call; mine, ***in bold****, are the response—although, as you will see I chose to steal some of Billy's words and make them my own. I trust he wouldn't mind:*

[260] Cole and Knowles, *Researching Teaching*, 22.

[261] Billy Collins, *The Art of Drowning* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995), 48-49.

On Turning Ten (Billy)

The whole idea of it makes me feel
like I'm coming down with something,
something worse than a stomach ache
or the headaches I get from reading in a bad light—
a kind of measles of the spirit,
a mumps of the psyche,
a disfiguring chicken pox of the soul.

On Turning Sixty (Norbert)

The whole idea of it makes me feel sick
something worse than a stomach ache.
It's called old age; but unlike a stomach ache,
it doesn't go away.
I'm not being very mindful
am I Billy? Worrying, that is, about the future.

Billy:
You tell me it is too early to be looking back,
but that is because you have forgotten
the perfect simplicity of being one
and the beautiful complexity introduced by two.
But I can lie on my bed and remember every digit.
At four I was an Arabian wizard.
I could make myself invisible
by drinking a glass of milk a certain way.
At seven I was a soldier, at nine a prince.

Norbert:
You tell me it's too early to be looking back,
I can only hope that's true,
I'll admit forgetting what it was like
to be one, or two.
Since then, there have been many embarrassing moments
when I wished *I* was invisible,
but here I go again, fretting about the past,
how often must Thay remind me that only leads to suffering?

I certainly remember eleven,
the summer of '69,
when I watched Neil Armstrong touch the moon.
When I built the best lunar module ever:
tin foil and cardboard,
"Tranquility Base: no girls allowed."
One small step for a boy, dreaming, dreaming.

And the time late at night,
I thought I saw an angel in my room,
but I guess it was only mom.

Billy:
But now I am mostly at the window
watching the late afternoon light.
Back then it never fell so solemnly
against the side of my tree house,
and my bicycle never leaned against the garage
as it does today,
all the dark blue speed drained out of it.

Norbert:
Now I am mostly at the window,
***happy* to watch the late afternoon light.**
Every night before I go to bed,
I open my front door
and say goodnight to the trees
grateful they are still there,
when so much of the world is burning.

Billy:
This is the beginning of sadness, I say to myself,
As I walk through the universe in my sneakers.
It is time to say good-bye to my imaginary friends,
Time to turn the first big number.

Norbert:
This is not the beginning of sadness, I say to myself
To be honest, mostly my stomach feels fine.
I'm learning to say good morning to my imaginary friends,
Time to turn the next magic number.

Billy:
It seems only yesterday I used to believe
there was nothing under my skin but light.
If you cut me I would shine.
But now when I fall upon the sidewalks of life,
I skin my knees, I bleed.

Norbert:
Sure, I've skinned my knees more than once
And, yes, it still hurts.

But like Thay always says,
"No mud, no lotus:
You can't grow lotus flowers on marble.
Suffering and happiness inter-are."

I'm grateful that I still have some light under my skin.
If my hands could speak:
Oh, if only my hands could speak.

The Return of Narcissus and Goldmund

Sometimes we are what we imagine ourselves to be—which brings me to a book I found myself rereading recently: *Narcissus and Goldmund*, by Hermann Hesse.[262] I first discovered this novel as a youth and have reread it several times over the years. As Jones points out, Hermann Hesse's novels portray the obsessio of Theological World One.[263] The novel, set in the middle ages, describes the friendship between Narcissus, a cloistered monk and teacher, and Goldmund, a wandering, often homeless, artist. As in

[262] Hermann Hesse, *Narcissus and Goldmund*, trans. Ursule Molinaro, (New York: Farrar, Straus &Giroux, 1968).

[263] Jones, *Theological Worlds,* 53.

many of Hesse's novels, the two main characters are essentially two sides of the same person.[264] This dualism is captured in the following passage from the novel, where Narcissus describes the differences between Goldmund and him:

> Natures of your kind, with strong, delicate senses, the soul-oriented, the dreamers, poets, lovers are almost always superior to us creatures of the mind. You take your being from your mothers. You live fully; you were endowed with the strength of love, the ability to feel. Whereas we creatures of reason, we don't live fully; we live in an arid land, even though we often seem to guide and rule you. Yours is the plenitude of life, the sap of the fruit, the garden of passion, the beautiful landscape of art. Your home is the earth; ours is the world of ideas. You are in danger of drowning in the world of senses; ours is the danger of suffocating in an airless void. You are an artist; I am a thinker. You sleep at the mother's breast; I wake in the desert. For me the sun shines; for you the moon and the stars.[265]

Goldmund, asleep at "the mother's breast," calls to mind the maternal nature of the divine: another image that has been attracting my attention in recent years. O'Murchu, like Merton, looks to Meister Eckhart for an analogy to describe this divine creativity. O'Murchu approves of what he calls Eckhart's birthing metaphor: "What does God do all day long: God lies on a maternity bed all day long."[266]

I have often identified with both characters, Narcissus *and* Goldmund. In my younger years I was more like Goldmund; I longed to be, as in the Mary Oliver poem,

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[264] Henry Hatfield, "Accepting the Universe; Hermann Hesse's Steppenwolf," in *Hermann Hesse*, ed. Harold Bloom (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2003), 114.

[265] Hesse, *Narcissus and Goldmund*, 45.

[266] O'Murchu, *The Transformation of Desire*, 68 (O'Murchu cites Fox, 2000, 41).

"that wild, that loving." Now, as I am older, I seem to gravitate more toward the 'Narcissus side' of my nature (read: teaching and the pursuit of a doctoral degree). This tension between the artistic and the scholarly has often been difficult.[267] W. Paul Jones captures the dynamics of this tension in his analysis of the Quaker, Rufus Jones, who

> imaged World One by using the Platonic myth of an original unified self that had been cut in half at birth. Life is a search for one's other half. For Jones this longing for original wholeness is not sexual, but mystical. The alien soul, yearning for the Eternal, is opened to a mystic love birthed within the primordial division. What follows is the double-faced anatomy of life – our search for God within God's search for us, in an eternal rhythm.[268]

My own exploration of the koan—"What was your original face when your parents were born?"—may in fact be my search for ways to re-unify the Platonic, mystical, original self—the reconnection of the 'Narcissus side' of my nature with the 'Goldmund side'.[269] Like Narcissus, I will continue to spend time in prayer, meditation, and with my beloved books. Like Goldmund—*still somewhat wild*—I will love, sing, dance, sculpt, and paint. Like Narcissus, I continue to stare at the stars and wonder. Like Goldmund, I will return to the forest and wander. I am a teacher; I am also a spiritual

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[267] There are even times while writing this dissertation when I wish I could step away from the computer and simply sing a song for you, my dear reader. In matters of the heart—and teaching is nothing if it is not a matter of the heart—perhaps the noblest thing we can do is sing our best song and hope someone is listening.

[268] Jones, *Theological Worlds,* 112.

[269] It would seem this has something to do with my motivation behind choosing a/r/tography. The artistic and the scholarly do not have to be dichotomous; a/r/tography and the practice of teaching are both ways to marry these two approaches and make them one. Likewise, pedagogy is often described as an art *and* a science. It is likely clear to my reader by now that my preference leans more toward the artistic—even though this comment in itself rings a dualistic tone.

pilgrim.

Beauty Way of the Heart

I have heard it said that we are meant live out our name—to *become* our name. I take my Dharma name seriously: Beauty Way of the Heart. Like Goldmund, I am a lover of Beauty. I capitalize the word Beauty here as I see it as the manifestation of the Divine. John O'Donohue writes: "In the presence of the God of Beauty our own beauty shines. God is the atmosphere where our essence clarifies, where all falsity and pretension vanish. Here we are utterly unfolded."[270]

In my Master's thesis I asked the following question: "What if beauty was the Tao? . . . I was not posing a formal research question. That would be a proposition too deep and wide for a Master's thesis [or for a doctoral dissertation for that matter]. It is, rather, a question for a lifetime."[271]

My love for Beauty is at the root of my desire to teach. Here then is another touchstone—*point vierge*. I experienced a significant 'aha moment' when I came upon the following passage in Robert E. Kennedy's book entitled, *Zen Spirit, Christian Spirit*: "Zen teachers do not lecture their students; instead they try to evoke insight by the skillful use of beauty. Indeed beauty and wisdom perish in the same ignorance."[272]

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[270] O'Donohue, *Beauty*, 248.

[271] Krumins, "The Brilliance of Beauty", 4.

[272] Robert E. Kennedy, *Zen Spirit, Christian Spirit: the Place of Zen in Christian Life* (New York and London: Continuum, 1995), 18.

The move to "evoke insight by the skillful use of beauty" has become my modus operandi in the classroom. With a Zen approach to teaching the emphasis is on showing, not telling.[273] This is exemplified in the legendary story of the Buddha's disciple, Mahakasyapa in what is known as the Flower Sermon. During a gathering of his followers, the Buddha silently held up a lotus flower. The non-verbal reply from Mahakasyapa was simply to smile. In that moment, Mahakasyapa demonstrated his understanding of the Buddha's teachings. The Buddha is then said to have spoken to his disciples, reminding them that ". . . he is not teaching an academic discipline or a theory, instead he is showing them how to cope with the trials and tribulations of everyday. "[274] This story of 'showing, not telling' is an example of 'transmission outside the scriptures' or 'Zen beyond words'.

In *Agents of Uncertainty*, John Danvers describes how several contemporary artists have utilized 'showing, not telling'. For example, Marina Abramovic invited a Tibetan Buddhist monk and an aborigine medicine man from Australia to sit in silence with her and her collaborator, Ulay, for several hours at a time. Danvers comments:

> The gallery visitors see the four motionless figures—they can sense the flow of energy within and between them but cannot know what they are experiencing. It is very unsettling to closely observe four human beings manifesting such stillness, concentration and discipline without being given an explanation or reason for their behaviour.[275]

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[273] John Danvers, *Agents of Uncertainty*, 173-174.

[274] Ibid., 174.

[275] Ibid., 175. Abramovic's 1983 performance art piece was entitled, "Nightsea Crossing—Conjunction."

I note in particular Danvers's phrase, "flow of energy." A performance art piece such as this, I would suggest, was an innovative way to illustrate—and at the same time *embody*—the liminal space.

Danvers also discusses a piece by the composer John Cage, first performed in 1952, called "4'33"—indicating its length: four minutes and thirty-three seconds. During the performance, the pianist opened and closed the piano lid several times but did not strike the keys—did not play any 'music'. Danvers remarks: "Cage makes use of a kind of transparent silence . . . [providing] us with a formal context in which to attend to what is happening all around and within us, all the time . . . Cage lets in the light of the everyday, apparently non-musical, sphere, in order to show us what we often miss: the quotidian delights of everyday sensations and events."[276]

I am inspired by the above examples of performance art. They encourage me to find imaginative ways in my classroom to "attend to what is happening all around us"—that is, to practice mindfulness; and thereby letting in "the light of the everyday"—the inherent light of beauty. By this, I am not suggesting that teachers become performers. Rather, that we encourage students to use their creativity—sometimes without words—'to show, not tell', and for teachers to do the same.[277]

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[276] Ibid., 190-91.

[277] For example, in a graduate course I taught recently at St. Stephen's College ("Spirituality: from Contemplation to Action")—following Abramovic's model—I placed two chairs at the front of the class and asked two student volunteers to sit silently in front of each other for a few moments, maintaining eye contact. I asked the rest of the class to simply 'witness' the experience. This was followed by a class discussion on the nature of the liminal space.

I reiterate: teachers must make room for silence. I am with Paul Woodruff, who asks:

> Why should a teacher be silent? Perhaps because words do not suffice to express what he knows in his heart; perhaps because he knows that students must learn the answers for themselves, not from his words, but through their own lives. The silence of a great teacher expresses awe and respect—awe for the enormous subject that is being learned and respect for the students who are learning it under their own power, undiminished by any interference from the teacher.[278]

I would like to reemphasize the statement from Kennedy, cited above—specifically regarding his use of the word *skillful*: "Zen teachers do not lecture their students; instead they try to evoke insight by the skillful use of beauty." To create space for silence, to offer a Zen koan, to hold up a flower: these are all examples of what is known in Buddhist terminology as the use of *skillful means*. Taigen Daniel Leighton writes:

> Skillful means . . . [involves] tailoring teaching and beneficial practice to the needs of particular beings. The individuality of each person is acknowledged. Everybody has her own unique tendencies, inclinations, and path to awakening. The diversity of spiritual teachings and tools exist because of the variety of those in need. There is no single right method or means for all.[279]

When we employ skillful means we trust our intuitive voice—the voice of our true self. Skillful means is not possible without being fully present. As John W. Schroeder writes, "'[S]killful means' arises from the idea that wisdom is embodied in how one

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[278] Paul Woodruff, *Reverence: Renewing a Forgotten Virtue* (Oxford University Press, 2001), 188.

[279] Taigen Daniel Leighton, *Faces of Compassion: Classic Bodhisattva Archetypes and their Modern Expression—an Introduction to Mahayana Buddhsim* (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2012), 76. I suggest that the methodology of skillful means is similar to a/r/tography; as Lu Ch'ai, cited in my introductory chapter, stated, "To be without method is deplorable, but to depend entirely on method is worse."

responds to others rather than an abstract conception of the world."[280] How then, as educators can we embody our wisdom in relation to others?

Beauty is the Tao

I would like to unpack Kennedy's earlier statement further. He calls for the skillful use of beauty. If this is what we are meant to do, it begs the question: What *is* beauty? An exploration of this question is in order within the context of beauty's place in the art of teaching.

Let us first consider what the poet Rumi had to say:

> "Let the beauty we love be what we do.
>
> There are hundreds of ways to kneel and kiss the ground."[281]

To kneel and kiss the ground is to embody beauty in its many faces. Crispin Sartwell has narrowed these down to a few in his text entitled, *Six Names of Beauty*.[282] I would like to explore the nature of beauty with Sartwell's text as a starting point. He looks at beauty through the lenses of six languages/cultures:

1. Beauty: *English*, the object of longing.

2. Yapha: *Hebrew*, glow, bloom.

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[280] John W. Schroeder, *Skillful Means: the Heart of Buddhist Compassion* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 3.

[281] Jalal al-Din Rumi, *The Essential Rumi*, trans. Coleman Barks (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), 36.

[282] Crispin Sartwell, *Six Names of Beauty* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006).

3. Sundara: *Sanskrit*, holiness.

4. To Kalon: *Greek*, Idea, ideal.

5. Wabi-Sabi: *Japanese*, humility, imperfection.

6. Hozho: *Navaho*, health, harmony.[283]

Sartwell's six names of beauty: call and response

Call: Sartwell discusses beauty as "objects of longing" by describing his first crush: Mrs. Emma Peel, played by Dianna Rigg, in the television series, "The Avengers". Sartwell writes: "At twelve I believed I was in love with her, and I pictured us together—not having sex, but just talking and perhaps sharing a chaste kiss."[284]

Response:

My first crush was (I'll give her a pseudonym) *Rosie*. It was in Miss Welch's Grade 3 class. Rosie and I played footsies underneath a table. At that age I hadn't yet even heard of the word sex, and I was too shy to offer her a kiss. I would not say Rosie was an *object* of longing. But I will always remember that moment. It might have been the time I first discovered beauty: the beauty of innocence, of childlike intimacy. I don't know whatever happened to Rosie. I think she left our school a year or so later. However, the liminal space between us has not disappeared, even after all these years. Time cannot dissolve such a space. Rosie and I *inter-are*.

[283] Ibid. These are the titles of Sartwell's six chapters.

[284] Ibid., 1.

Call: *Yapha*, glow, bloom. Sartwell writes: "[T]he extraordinary deep-red rose at the moment of perfect bloom, the monarch butterfly emerging wet and sparkling from the chrysalis into the full light, the indigo bunting streaking in utter, iridescent cobalt toward the feeder, bluer than anything else in the world—these arrest our attention and refresh our sensations."[285] And Sartwell writes of water: "Water is perhaps the most beautiful and varied of all substances, even if it is the most common on earth. One aspect of this beauty is water's receptivity, created essentially by its liquidity and transparency . . . Indeed, the sound of a small, running creek or stream is the sound itself of peace."[286]

Response:

Emerging from the chrysalis: *educare*.

The indigo bunting: *the student, the blue angel, messenger back to the world.*

Water: *teaching as a transparent act—receptive, flowing, being peace.*

[285] Ibid., 29.

[286] Ibid., 33-34.

Call: *Sundara*, holiness. Sartwell writes:

The route from Emma Peel to God seems obscure, but it is direct, as many great spiritual texts (such as the Song of Solomon, the poems of Rumi, Plato's *Symposium*, and the testimony of St. Teresa of Avila) attest. Beauty is fundamentally connected to spirit in every culture, and every religion expresses its spirituality in some of its most exquisitely made objects, which are offered to God, or to the people as a way to achieve contact with God.[287]

Response:

Imagine if every word we spoke, every glance toward a student, every act of presence, were expressions of holiness—*exquisitely made*.

Call: To Kalon: *Greek*, Idea, ideal. Sartwell writes:

The Greek words for beautiful (kalos) and beauty (to kalon) have moral as well as aesthetic force. They refer to "nobility" as well as what we would think of as direct visual beauty. But these terms also have an epistemic dimension; they are connected to the idea of knowledge. All of these meanings might be brought together in a notion of "illumination"; the kalos is above all, we might say, what is drenched in light. The noble soul is the clearly illuminated soul, and such a soul will be beautiful.[288]

Response:

Idea, ideal. Imagine a *classroom* with moral as well as aesthetic force: a classroom illuminated by the light of knowledge.

[287] Ibid., 57.

[288] Ibid., 88.

Call: Wabi-Sabi: *Japanese*, humility, imperfection. Sartwell describes the beauty of Wabi-Sabi:

> [W]abi-sabi is an aesthetic of poverty and loneliness, imperfection and austerity, affirmation and melancholy. Wabi-sabi is the beauty of the withered, weathered, tarnished, scarred, intimate, coarse, earthly, evanescent, tentative, ephemeral . . . a broken earthenware cup in contrast to a Ming vase, a branch of autumn leaves in contrast to a dozen roses, a lined and bent old woman in contrast to a model, a mature love as opposed to an infatuation . . .[289]

Response:

At sixty I embody many aspects of wabi-sabi. At sixty I am *in-between* autumn and winter: already somewhat weathered. At my age it would not be vanity to say I have gained some wisdom. One might even say that wabi-sabi evokes the essence of wisdom. This wabi-sabi-wisdom is what I bring to my classroom. This wabi-sabi-wisdom captures the *texture* of my presence. Thus, I am able to appreciate—even love—the traces of wabi-sabi in my students: the beauty of their imperfection.

Call: Hozho: *Navaho*, health, harmony. Sartwell writes:

> Of the various names of beauty we have touched, hozho is the most comprehensive . . . It refers above all to the world when it is flourishing; it refers to the community, flourishing in the world; it refers to things we make, which flourish and play a role in the flourishing of other things; and it refers to ourselves, flourishing as makers, as people inhabiting a community that inhabits

[289] Ibid. 114. Moreover, in terms of the wabi-sabi aesthetic I remind my dear reader of my earlier discussion of the tea ceremony—in particular, Sen Rikyu's seven rules of tea. Sartwell writes: "Every aspect of the Rikyu way of tea is wab-sabi." Ibid., 115.

> a world. It is a word for the oneness of all things when they are joined together in a wholesome state.[290]

Response:

Is this not what we want most for our students: to *flourish*? Is this not what teaching as a vocation is all about: to play a role in their flourishing? Is this not what we want for ourselves as teachers, as human beings: to flourish? If the answer to these questions is no then perhaps we need to find a different vocation.

Sartwell includes a "Coda" at the end of his book: "Beauty has a thousand names. The point, obviously, is not to nail it down or make it ours (for example, by writing about its names), but to expand into it. That is an exercise in awareness, a way to keep finding what we have lost."[291] This dissertation, as an extended meditation on the nature of the liminal space, is also about the beauty of that space—a r*ecovery* of that beauty, a recovery of its *soul*. Robert Romanyshyn writes: "Research with soul in mind is re-search, a searching again, for something that has already made its claim upon us, something we have already known, however dimly, but have forgotten."[292] In order to embody the practice of beauty we must rediscover it again and again because it has made a claim upon us.

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[290] Ibid., 135.

[291] Ibid., 152.

[292] Robert D. Romanyshyn, *The Wounded Researcher: Research with Soul in Mind* (New Orleans: Spring Journal Books, 2007), 4.

Beauty is a *miracle*:

> **Miracle**: From the Latin *mīrāculum*: object of wonder. *Mīrāculum* from *mīrārī*, to wonder at. From *mīrus*, wonderful. From smeiros [(s) mei-PIE-proto-Indo-European] "to smile, to be astonished." Also Sanskrit: *smerah*, "smiling." Also Old Church Slavic: *Smejo*—to laugh.[293]

I am drawn to what Jackie Seidel calls a "curriculum for miracles."[294] In my mind, a curriculum for miracles is a curriculum for beauty. Seidel writes:

> A curriculum for Miracles walks gently on this earth. It leaves footprints of love, compassion, forgiveness everywhere . . . A Curriculum for Miracles understands that life can be opened from this place called a classroom or school, or it can be closed. Life can be seen as wondrous or as dull. It can creatively overflow with joy, justice, peace and love, or it can serve the future, the literal, the non-miraculous.[295]

A classroom filled with beauty is miraculous. In making a case for beauty I am not alone. Joe Winston states: "The very ubiquity of beauty in our cultural lives is sufficient evidence for us to regard it as a necessary human value."[296] He calls on teachers to consider the importance of beauty in their personal and professional lives. "If beauty is sleeping, few educationalists are trying to awaken her, and the vast majority seem

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[293] Jackie Seidel, "A Curriculum for Miracles" in Jackie Seidel & David W. Jardine, *Ecological Pedagogy, Buddhist Pedagogy, Hermeneutic Pedagogy: Experiments in a Curriculum for Miracles* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2014), 7.

[294] Ibid.

[295] Ibid., 11-13.

[296] Joe Winston, *Beauty and Education* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 4.

happy to forget about her altogether."[297] I, for one, hope to awaken her—every time I step into the classroom.

A Chapter Summary of Sorts

Dear Father Louis,

Here is another poem for you.

* * * * * *

On Turning Sixty Reimagined

Looking deeper

following my bliss

longing to hold Mahakasyapa's flower

Neil Armstrong walks still

the beginning of happiness

I am Narcissus still

thinking, thinking, too much thinking

wandering in the desert

I am Goldmund still

feeling, feeling, never too much feeling

searching for beauty

[297] Ibid., 1.

Yes, my soul assents

Yes, my dear Rosie

I'm still here

I am water, receptive

I am drenched in light

light, light

I am a teacher

searching within, reaching out

I am wabi-sabi-wisdom,

smiling.

* * * * * *

Peace,

Norbert.

P.S. I'm moving my dissertation toward some closure now.

Chapter 6

Concluding Fragments: In Search of the Gestalt

Curating the Liminal Space

Dear Father Louis, dear Mrs. Tayoshi, dear Thay, dear Emily Dickinson, dear Rosie, my dear, dear, reader: First of all, I have tried to tell the truth.

The truth of the liminal space cannot be contained in a frame.

Instead of a frame we have two hands: mine and yours, held together.

Instead of two hands we have a million, maybe a trillion hands, held together. That is the dream—this archive of longings.

The colour of the liminal space is blue: blue moon, blue womb, blue water, flowing, transparent, effervescent.

Flowing between my hand and yours. Flowing between a trillion hands throughout dreamtime. Never-ending.

The liminal space is a place to be held. Don't be afraid. I am holding you.

The liminal place is a thin place. But thin doesn't mean fragile. Two hands, a trillion hands, held together are stronger than you might think.

temps vierge

points vierge

kairos time

liminal time

filled with promise

"Harmony reflects both the evanescence of all things and the unchanging in the changing."

The liminal reflects both the evanescence of all things and the unchanging in the changing.

"To be without method is deplorable, but to depend entirely on method is worse."

"The deepest level of communication is not communication but communion."

To coin a phrase:

liminal communion.

Liminal communion is

limitless.

Liminal communion is methodless

effortless: *wu-wei*

"There is a field . . . I'll meet you there."

The sound of the liminal space is the chant: call and response.

Spem in allium: forty voices.

A trillion voices.

The sound of the liminal space is silence—*ontological silence*:

The wab-sabi man performing an interpretive dance. Just like"one female angel dancing alone in her stocking feet."

But she is not alone. I am dancing with her.

"If you are a poet, you will see clearly that there is a cloud floating in this sheet of paper."

We are the cloud. We inter-are.

Floating in liminal space.

"Communitas can only be conveyed properly through stories."

Once upon a time there was a boy. The boy dreamt of being an astronaut. *He skinned his knees.* He dreamt of angels.

The boy grew up to be a teacher. He fell in love with his students: humans with wings. *May they be well and happy*.

Zen

Huang-po: “Zen is beyond all words.
Away with all thinking and explaining.
There is only mysterious silent understanding and no more.”

Thomas Merton: “. . . wordless . . . beyond words . . . beyond speech . . . beyond concept.”

Victor Turner: “ . . . neither here nor there . . . betwixt and between.”

I will soon be *away with all this thinking and explaining*: Zen is the wordless threshold, the liminal space.

Eclipse haiku II (for Thay)

Zen moon, silent moon
Merton’s bird calling, calling
Waiting for the sun

A Zen Play in One Act

Master: “What was your original face before your parents were born?”

Disciple: “I don’t remember.”

Master: “You are called to remember.”

Disciple: “Open the door of my memory.”

Master: “It is open. Walk across the *threshold*.”

Disciple: “Carry me.”

Master: “My task is only to open the door. You must carry yourself.”

Zen koans and other matters of life and death:

"We must *realize* these koans, and we must actualize them in everything that we do. That is the only way we will truly transform our lives."

Being Peace

Child soldiers.

Child soldiers.

Child soldiers.

Child soldiers.

Child soldiers.

Child soldiers.

Child soldiers.

Child soldiers.

Child soldiers.

Child soldiers.

Child soldiers.

Child soldiers.

Child soldiers.

Child soldiers.

How many more child soldiers will we accept? The Angel of History is calling.

No, that's not quite right.

Rather:

The Angel of History is *screaming*.

What is our response?

" . . . if we forget, we are guilty, we are accomplices."

Perhaps we can start with one step, then another:

"We have to walk in a way that we only print peace and serenity on the Earth. When we are able to take one step peacefully and happily, we are working for the cause of peace and happiness for the whole of humankind."

In response to the Angel's screams I can only speak for myself. I will take these steps of peace as best I can.

By taking these steps with my students I embark on what I have named *a pedagogy of peace.*

The Cultivation of Presence

Curare: to take care of (offering a bowl of tea).

By being with my students in service I embark on what I have named *a pedagogy of witnessing.*

A pedagogy of witnessing is *a pedagogy of compassion.*

A pedagogy of compassion is *pedagogical presence.*

A pedagogical presence is a *pedagogy of peace*.

A pedagogy of peace is *a pedagogy of sanctuary*. “Pedagogy imagined as sanctuary calls for the courageous resistance of ways of living, being together, and educating that engage in or promote social, ecological, cultural, and economic violence.”

The *art* of being peace.

The *art* of compassion.

The *art* of witnessing.

The *art* of resisting violence.

The Zen of Authentic Teaching:

To create harmony.

To offer respect.

To embody purity.

To embrace tranquility.

the inter-being of the temenos

erotic

wild

silent

being peace

alone/together

in the liminal space

I am the contemplative educator:

I am slowing down (breathing in, breathing out).

I am tending (listening) to my own suffering.

I am tending (listening) to the suffering of others: *tikkun olam.*

I am following my bliss. I am reveling in my students' bliss.

I am Narcissus, I am Goldmund. I am Wabi-Sabi-Wisdom.

I am ChristZen.

I am Beauty Way of the Heart.

Further Reflections on a Curriculum for Beauty

"Beauty will save the world."

—Fyodor Dostoevsky[298]

Several years ago, when I was interviewed for the Doctor of Ministry Program, I was asked whether I had already thought about a topic for my dissertation. I imagined that it would be a continuation of my Master's thesis: "Beauty: Part Two" so to speak.

[298] Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Notebooks for The Idiot*, trans. Katherine Strelsky (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967), 172.

Although I have moved from that specific topic, at least explicitly, in a sense I have come full circle. Beauty manifests within the liminal space.

I recall the letter from Robin Parks. As she listened to Bach's solo cello suites, and as she gazed at Gauguin's painting of a transparent pink dress, in her loneliness she "craved" for the company of beauty. As sentient beings—as spiritual beings—we all crave for connection, or to use Merton's word, *communion*. This craving, this longing, calls us to the liminal space. When we are in communion we are transformed.

Phenomenologically, this transformation into communion is the *essence* of the liminal space. This essence, once experienced, is a thing of beauty. Theologically, the liminal space is a way between the human and the Divine. The human and the Other *inter-are*. The liminal space is then a sacred space, sanctuary. Pedagogically, the liminal space is where learning and creativity can flourish, where classroom becomes *temenos*. The liminal space is where presence is fully accessible. As educators the choice is ours: we can embody presence or not. When we embody presence we become instruments of peace. Hopefully, our students will in turn do the same.

I still hope, like Dostoevsky, that beauty will save the world. However, there may be more to it than that: perhaps *education* will save the world—an education with beauty at its heart. We must be mindful of beauty—and to *live* beauty—in order for that dream to be realized. As educators, when we "evoke insight by the skillful use of beauty" we stand within the liminal space. This space is where love can flourish.

Within this dissertation I have drawn together numerous fragments in an attempt to create a gestalt—something more than the sum of its parts. Of course there is always *more*. For example, artist/researcher/teacher are labels for only three aspects of who I am. I am also a person with more to learn, that is, beyond what I have described in these pages. There are many more names for beauty. There are many more theological entry points into the liminal space. I have only offered a small handful here. I hope that these have resonated with my readers. You, my friends, have undoubtedly your own, unique, experiences of the liminal. At the least, I hope this dissertation will serve further conversations about the possibilities for peacemaking, the joy of teaching, the joy of learning, the art of contemplation, and the art of mindful living. If these conversations take place, this dissertation will truly have served as more than the sum of its parts. Moreover, I hope these conversations will prompt further research into the beauty of the liminal space, and creative ways to honour it. The liminal space is all around us; all we have to do is look for it.

This dissertation has called for a pedagogy of witnessing which in turn leads to a pedagogy of peace. These pedagogies lie at the heart of the classroom as sanctuary. To practice authentic witnessing, with love, is to practice peace. In our culture—often threatened by violence—these contemplative approaches to education are needed now more than ever.

At the beginning of this dissertation I asked how a multi-leveled understanding of the liminal space can help develop an educator's ability to offer "pedagogical

presence" to his/her students. I can only answer that question for myself. I believe that through the writing of this dissertation, and with my continued mindfulness practice, I have indeed deepened my ability to be present with my students. Of course, they will be the judges of that. As I embark on the next phase of my teaching and learning journey I set the following intention: to be ever mindful of my students' beauty, to serve the liminal space with integrity, and to do so, always, with beginner's mind. The Curator of Silences will be silent now.

After(words): a Dialogue

Noble Reader: *I thought you were going to be silent now.*

Beauty Way of the Heart: *Yes, but you called me here.*

Noble Reader: *Indeed. You've been doing all of the talking. If you don't mind, I'd like a turn. You've given me more than one hundred and fifty pages of text—that's more than twenty-nine thousand words—and I still don't know how you feel.*

Beauty Way of the Heart: *Peaceful.*

Noble Reader: *That's it?*

Beauty Way of the Heart: *That's a lot.*

Noble Reader: *Nothing else?*

Beauty Way of the Heart: *I feel happy.*

Noble Reader: *Happy?*

Beauty Way of the Heart: *Yes. Happy teachers change the world.*

Noble Reader: *In that case, I give you my blessing, here, in this place.*

Beauty Way of the Heart: *Thank you. Where am I, anyway?*

Noble Reader: *You're back in Betweenity.*

Beauty Way of the Heart: *What am I in-between?*

Noble Reader: *You're in-between the dissertation and the next steps. What pray tell, will you do now?*

Beauty Way of the Heart: *I think I'll plant a garden—help grow a few more lotus flowers out of the mud. And take some time to breathe—outside the words.*

A Note on the Type

I have chosen to use the *Calibri* font throughout this project for aesthetic reasons. The typeface, designed by Luc(as) De Groot, has a "warm and soft character"[299]—more fitting in my view for a dissertation on the liminal space than the Times New Roman font normally used at St. Stephen's College.

[299] "LucasFonts http://www.lucasfonts.com/case-studies/calibri-consolas/. Accessed November 15, 2017.

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